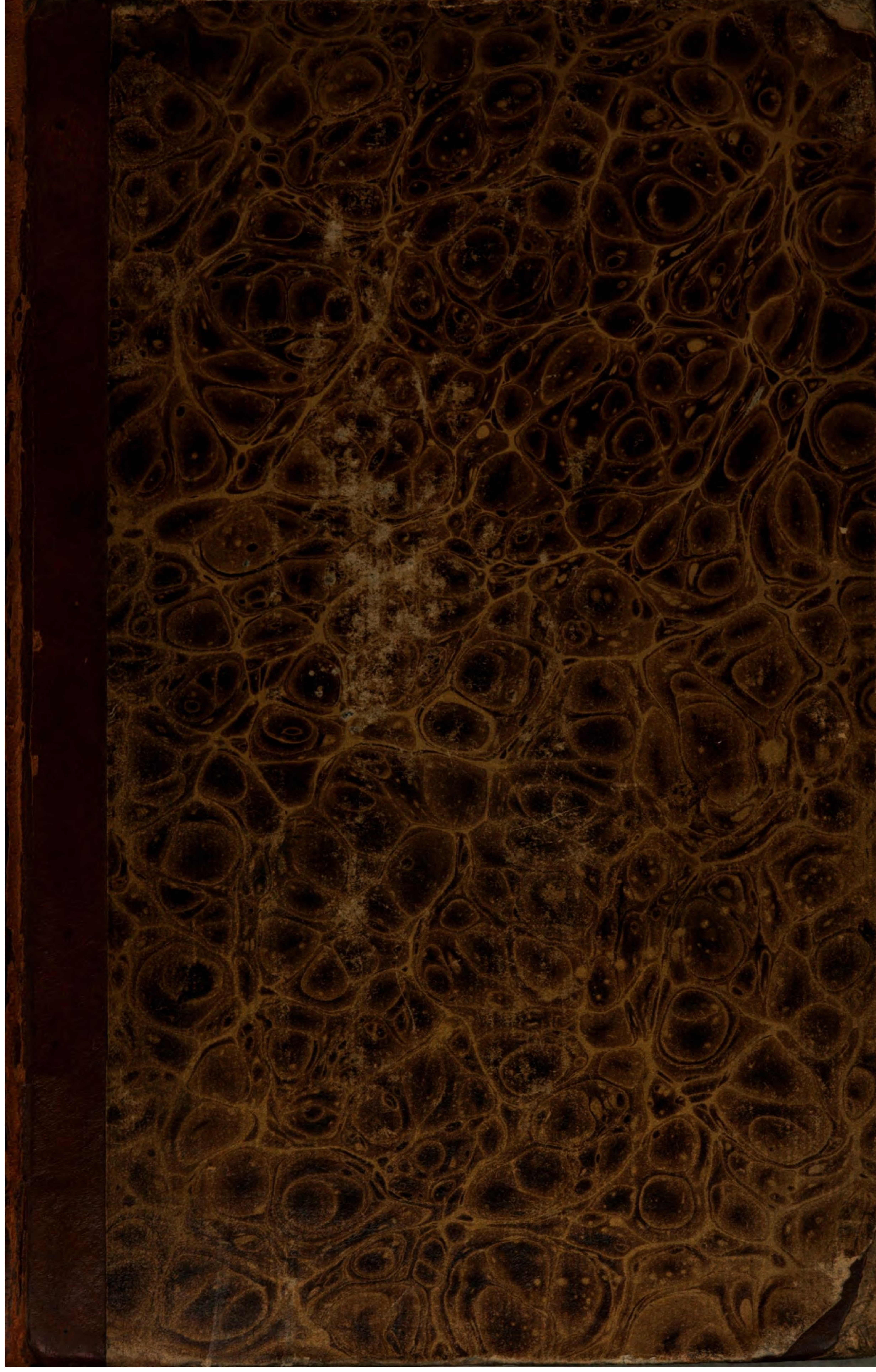




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Shakespeare

Boys' Song

Shakespeare

1673

Drake



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SHAKSPEARE

AND

HIS TIMES.

SHAKESPEARE

THE FIRST

SHAKSPEARE

AND HIS TIMES;

INCLUDING

THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET;

CRITICISMS ON HIS GENIUS AND WRITINGS; A NEW CHRONOLOGY OF HIS
PLAYS; A DISQUISITION ON THE OBJECT OF HIS SONNETS;

AND A HISTORY OF

*THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AMUSEMENTS, SUPERSTITIONS, POETRY,
AND ELEGANT LITERATURE OF HIS AGE.*

By NATHAN DRAKE, M.D.

AUTHOR OF

"LITERARY HOURS," "ESSAYS ON PERIODICAL LITERATURE," &c.

— On the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep;
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will;
That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old; and sexes both enchanted.

The very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE TWO QUARTO VOLUMES COMPRISED IN ONE.



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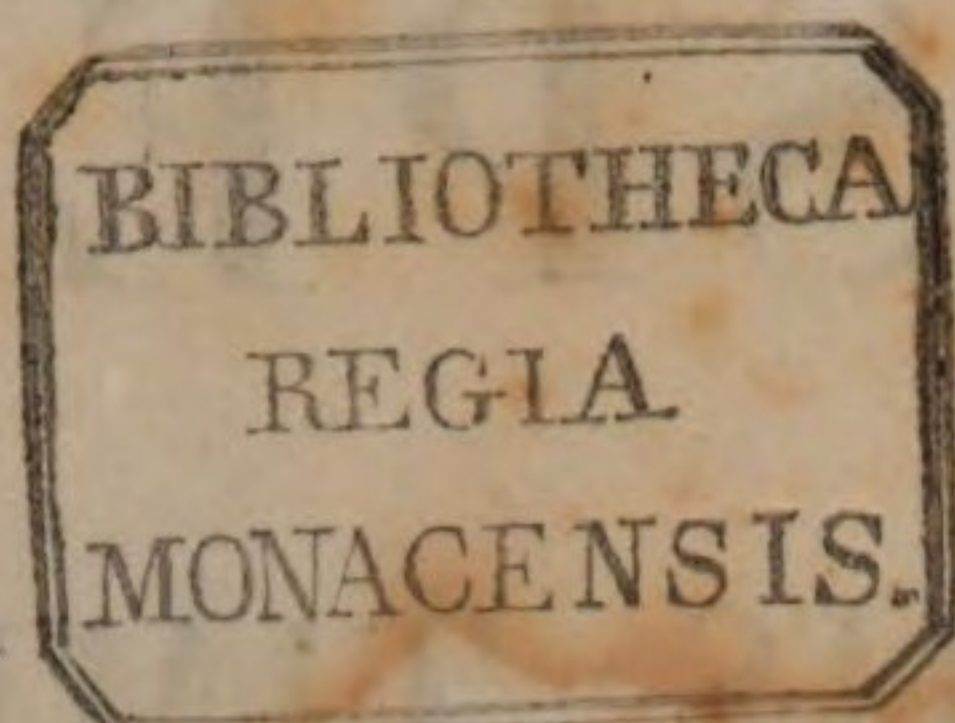
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PREFACE.

THOUGH two centuries have now elapsed, since the death of Shakspeare, no attempt has hitherto been made to render him the medium for a comprehensive and connected view of the Times in which he lived.

Yet, if any man be allowed to fill a station thus conspicuous and important, Shakspeare has undoubtedly the best claim to the distinction; not only from his pre-eminence as a dramatic poet, but from the intimate relation which his works bear to the manners, customs, superstitions, and amusements of his age.

Struck with the interest which a work of this kind, if properly executed, might possess, the author was induced, several years ago, to commence the undertaking, with the express intention of blending with the detail of manners, etc. such a portion of criticism, biography, and literary history, as should render the whole still more attractive and complete.

In attempting this, it has been his aim to place Shakspeare in the foreground of the picture, and to throw around him, in groups more or less distinct and full, the various objects of his design; giving them prominence and light, according to their greater or smaller connection with the principal figure.

More especially has it been his wish, to infuse throughout the whole plan, whether considered in respect to its entire scope, or to the parts of which it is composed, that degree of unity and integrity, of relative proportion and just bearing, without which neither harmony, simplicity, nor effect, can be expected or produced.

With a view, also, to distinctness and perspicuity of elucidation, the whole has been distributed into three parts or pictures, entitled,—“SHAK-

SPEARE IN STRATFORD;" — "SHAKSPEARE IN LONDON;" — "SHAKSPEARE IN RETIREMENT;" — which, though inseparably united, as forming but portions of the same story, and harmonized by the same means, have yet, both in subject and execution, a peculiar character to support.

The first represents our Poet in the days of his youth, on the banks of his native Avon, in the midst of rural imagery, occupations, and amusements; in the second, we behold him in the Capital of his country, in the centre of rivalry and competition, in the active pursuit of reputation and glory; and in the third, we accompany the venerated bard to the shades of retirement, to the bosom of domestic peace, to the enjoyment of unsullied fame.

It has, therefore, been the business of the author, in accordancy with his plan, to connect these delineations with their relative accompaniments; to incorporate, for instance, with the first, what he has to relate of the country, as it existed in the age of Shakspeare; its manners, customs, and characters; its festivals, diversions, and many of its superstitions; opening and closing the subject with the biography of the poet, and binding the intermediate parts, not only by a perpetual reference to his drama, but by their own constant and direct tendency towards the development of the one object in view.

With the second, which commences with Shakspeare's introduction to the stage as an actor, is combined the poetic, dramatic, and general literature of the times, together with an account of metropolitan manners and diversions, and a full and continued criticism on the poems and plays of our bard.

After a survey, therefore, of the Literary world, under the heads of Bibliography, Philology, Criticism, History, Romantic and Miscellaneous Literature, follows a View of the Poetry of the same period, succeeded by a critique on the juvenile productions of Shakspeare, and including a biographical sketch of Lord Southampton, and a new hypothesis on the origin and object of the Sonnets.

Of the immediately subsequent description of diversions, etc. the Economy of the Stage forms a leading feature, as preparatory to a History of Dramatic Poetry, previous to the year 1590; and this is again introduc-

tory to a discussion concerning the Period when Shakspeare commenced a writer for the theatre; to a new chronology of his plays, and to a criticism on each drama; a department which is interspersed with dissertations on the Fairy Mythology, the Apparitions, the Witchcraft, and the Magic of Shakspeare; portions of popular credulity which had been, in reference to this distribution, omitted in detailing the superstitions of the country.

This second part is then terminated by a summary of Shakspeare's dramatic character, by a brief view of dramatic poetry during his connection with the stage, and by the biography of the poet to the close of his residence in London.

The third and last of these delineations is, unfortunately, but too short, being altogether occupied with the few circumstances which distinguish the last three years of the life of our bard, with a review of his disposition and moral character, and with some notice of the first tributes paid to his memory.

It will readily be admitted, that the materials for the greater part of this arduous task are abundant; but it must also be granted, that they are dispersed through a vast variety of distant and unconnected departments of literature; and that to draw forth, arrange, and give a luminous disposition to these masses of scattered intelligence, is an achievement of no slight magnitude, especially when it is considered, that no step in the progress of such an undertaking can be made, independent of a constant recurrence to authorities.

How far the author is qualified for the due execution of his design, remains for the public to decide; but it may, without ostentation, be told, that his leisure, for the last thirty years, has been, in a great degree, devoted to a line of study immediately associated with the subject; and that his attachment to old English literature has led him to a familiarity with the only sources from which, on such a topic, authentic illustration is to be derived.

He will likewise venture to observe, that, in the style of criticism which he has pursued, it has been his object, an ambitious one it is true, to unfold, in a manner more distinct than has hitherto been effected, the

peculiar character of the poet's drama; and, lastly, to produce a work, which, while it may satisfy the poetical antiquary, shall, from the variety, interest, and integrity of its component parts, be equally gratifying to the general reader.

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SHAKSPEARE AND HIS TIMES.

PART I.

SHAKSPEARE IN STRATFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Birth of Shakspeare—Account of his Family—Orthography of his Name.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, the object almost of our idolatry as a dramatic poet, was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, on the 23d April, 1564, and he was baptized on the 26th of the same month.

Of his family, not much that is certain can be recorded ; but it would appear, from an instrument in the College of Heralds, confirming the grant of a coat of arms to John Shakspeare in 1599, that his great grandfather had been rewarded by Henry the Seventh, “for his faithfull and approved service, with lands and tenements given to him in those parts of Warwickshire, where,” proceeds this document, “they have continued by some descents in good reputation and credit.” Notwithstanding this assertion, however, no such grant, after a minute examination made by Mr. Malone in the chapel of the Rolls, has been discovered ; whence we have reason to infer, that the heralds have been mistaken in their statement, and that the bounty of the monarch was directed through a different channel. From the language, indeed, of two rough draughts of a prior grant of arms to John Shakspeare in 1596, it is probable that the service alluded to was of a military cast, for it is there expressly said, that he was rewarded “for his faithful and valiant service,” a term, perhaps, implying the heroism of our poet’s ancestor in the field of Bosworth.

That the property, thus bestowed upon the family of Shakspeare, descended to John, the father of the poet, and contributed to his influence and respectability, there is no reason to doubt. From the register, indeed, and public writings relating to Stratford, Mr. Rowe has justly inferred, that the Shakspeares were of good figure and fashion there, and were considered as gentlemen. We may presume, however, that the patrimony of Mr. John Shakspeare, the parent of our great dramatist, was not very considerable, as he found the profits of business necessary to his support. He was, in fact, a wool-stapler, and, there is reason to suppose, in a large way ; for he was early chosen a member of the corporation of his town, a situation usually connected with respectable circumstances, and soon after, he filled the office of high bailiff, or chief magistrate of that body. The record of these promotions has been thus given from the books of the corporation.

"Jan. 10, in the 6th year of the reign of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, John Shakspeare passed his Chamberlain's accounts."

"At the Hall holden the eleventh day of September, in the eleventh year of the reign of our sovereign lady Elizabeth, 1569, were present Mr. John Shakspeare, High Bailiff." *

It was during the period of his filling this important office, that he first obtained a grant of arms; and, in a note annexed to the subsequent patent of 1596, now in the College of Arms, † it is stated that he was likewise a justice of the peace, and possessed of lands and tenements to the amount of 500*l*. The final confirmation of this grant took place in 1599, in which his shield and coat are described to be, "In a field of gould upon a bend sable, a speare of the first, the poynt upward, hedded argent;" and for his crest or cognisance. "A falcon with his wyngs displayed, standing on a wrethe of his coullers, supporting a speare armed hedded, or steeled sylver." ‡

Mr. John Shakspeare married, though in what year is not accurately known, the daughter and heir of Robert Arden, of Wellingcote, in the county of Warwick, who is termed, in the Grant of Arms of 1596, "a gentleman of worship." The Arden, or Ardern family, appears to have been of considerable antiquity; for, in Fuller's Worthies, Rob. Arden de Bromwich, ar. is among the names of the gentry of this county returned by the commissioners in the twelfth year of King Henry the Sixth, 1433; and in the eleventh and sixteenth years of Elizabeth, A. D. 1562 and 1568, Sim. Ardern, ar. and Edw. Ardrn, ar. are enumerated, by the same author, among the sheriffs of Warwickshire. § It is well known that the woodland part of this county was formerly denominated Ardern, though, for the sake of euphony, frequently softened towards the close of the sixteenth century, into the smoother appellation of Arden; hence it is not improbable, that the supposition of Mr. Jacob, who reprinted, in 1770, the Tragedy of Arden of Feversham, a play which was originally published in 1592, may be correct; namely that Shakspeare, the poet, was descended by the female line from the unfortunate individual whose tragical death is the subject of this drama; for though the name of this gentleman was originally Ardern, he seems early to have experienced the fate of the county district, and to have had his surname harmonized by a similar omission. In consequence of this marriage, Mr. John Shakspeare and his posterity were allowed, by the College of Heralds, to impale their arms with the ancient arms of the Ardens of Wellingcote. **

Of the issue of John Shakspeare by this connection, the accounts are contradictory and perplexed; nor is it absolutely ascertained, whether he had only one wife, or whether he might not have had two, or even three. Mr. Rowe, whose narrative has been usually followed, has given him ten children, among whom he considers William the poet, as the eldest son. †† The Register, however, of the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon, which commences in 1558, is incompatible with this statement; for, we there find eleven children ascribed to John Shakspeare, ten baptized, and one, the baptism of which had taken place before the commencement of the Register, buried. ‡‡ The dates of these baptisms, and of two or three other events, recorded in this Register, it will be necessary, for the sake of elucidation, to transcribe:

"*Jone*, daughter of John Shakspeare, was baptized Sept. 15, 1558.

"*Margaret*, daughter of John Shakspeare, was buried April 30, 1563.

"*WILLIAM*, son of John Shakspeare, was baptized April 26, 1564.

"*Gilbert*, son of John Shakspeare, was baptized Oct. 3, 1566.

* Communicated to Mr Malone by the Rev. Mr. Davenport, vicar of Stratford upon Avon.

† Vincent, vol. clvii. p. 24.

‡ See the instrument, at full length, Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 146, edit. of 1803.

§ The History of the Worthies of England, part. iii. fol. 131. 132.

** See Shakspeare's coat of arms. Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 146.

†† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 58. 59.

‡‡ *Ibid.* p. 133.

- " *Jone*,* daughter of John Shakspeare, was baptized April 15, 1569.
- " *Anne*, daughter of Mr. John Shakspeare, was baptized Sept. 28, 1571.
- " *Richard*, son of Mr. John Shakspeare, was baptized March 11, 1573-4.
- " *Edmund*, son of Mr. John Shakspeare, was baptized May 3, 1580.
- " *John Shakspeare* and Margery Roberts were married Nov. 25, 1584.
- " *Margery*, wife of John Shakspeare, was buried Oct. 29, 1587.
- " *Ursula*, daughter of John Shakspeare, was baptized March 11, 1588.
- " *Humphrey*, son of John Shakspeare, was baptized May 24, 1590.
- " *Philip*, son of John Shakspeare, was baptized Sept. 21, 1591.
- " *Mr. John Shakspeare* was buried Sept. 8, 1601.
- " *Mary Shakspeare*, widow, was buried Sept. 9, 1608."

Now it is evident, that if the ten children which were baptized, according to this Register, between the years 1558 and 1591, are to be ascribed to the father of our poet, he must necessarily have had eleven, in consequence of the record of the decease of his daughter Margaret. He must also have had three wives, for we find his second wife, Margery, died in 1587, and the death of a third, Mary a widow, is noticed in 1608.

It was suggested to Mr Malone,† that very probably, Mr John Shakspeare had a son born to him, as well as a daughter, before the commencement of the Register, and that this his eldest son was, as is customary, named after his father, John; a supposition which (as no other child was baptized by the Christian name of the old gentleman) carries some credibility with it, and was subsequently acquiesced in by Mr Malone himself.

In this case, therefore, the marriage recorded in the Register, is that of John Shakspeare the younger with Margery Roberts, and the three children born between 1588 and 1591, Ursula, Humphrey, and Philip, the issue of this John, not by the first, but by a second marriage; for as Margery Shakspeare died in 1587, and Ursula was baptized in 1588-9, these children must have been by the Mary Shakspeare, whose death is mentioned as occurring in 1608, and as she is there denominated a widow, the younger John must consequently have died before that date.

The result of this arrangement will be, that the father of our poet had only nine children, and that WILLIAM was not the eldest, but the second son.

On either plan, however, the account of Mr. Rowe is equally inaccurate; and as the introduction of an elder son involves a variety of suppositions, and at the same time nothing improbable is attached to the consideration of this part of the Register in the light in which it usually appears, that is, as allusive solely to the father, it will, we think, be the better and the safer mode to rely upon it, according to its more direct and literal import. This determination will be greatly strengthened by reflecting, that old Mr. Shakspeare was, on the authority of the last instrument granting him a coat of arms, living in 1599; that on the testimony of the Register, taken in the common acceptation, he was not buried until September, 1601; and that in no part of the same document is the epithet younger annexed to the name of John Shakspeare, a mark of distinction which there is every reason to suppose would have been introduced, had the father and a son of the same Christian name been not only living at the same time in the same town, but the latter likewise a parent.

That the circumstances of Mr. John Shakspeare were, at the period of his marriage, and for several years afterwards, if not affluent, yet easy and respectable, there is every reason to suppose, from his having filled offices of the first trust and importance in his native town; but, from the same authority which has in-

* It was common in the age of Queen Elizabeth to give the same Christian name to two children successively. This was undoubtedly done in the present instance. The former Jone having probably died, (though I can find no entry of her burial in the Register, nor indeed of many of the other children of John Shakspeare) the name of Jone, a very favourite one in those days, was transferred to another new-born child.—Malone from Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 134.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 136.

duced us to draw this inference, another of a very different kind, with regard to a subsequent portion of his life, may with equal confidence be taken. In the books of the corporation of Stratford it is stated, that—

“ At the hall holden Nov. 19th, in the 21st year of the reign of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, it is ordained, that every Alderman shall be taxed to pay weekly 4*d.*, saving John Shakspeare and Robert Bruce, who shall not be taxed to pay any thing; and every Burgess to pay 2*d.*” Again,

“ At the hall holden on the 6th day of September, in the 28th year of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth :

“ At this hall William Smith and Richard Courte are chosen to be Aldermen in the places of John Wheler and John Shakspeare, for that Mr. Wheler doth desire to be put out of the company, and Mr. Shakspeare doth not come to the halls, when they be warned, nor hath not done of long time.”*

The conclusion to be drawn from these memoranda must unavoidably be, that, in 1579, ten years after he had served the office of High Bailiff, his situation, in a pecuniary light, was so much reduced, that, on this account, he was excused the weekly payment of 4*d.*; and that, in 1586, the same distress still subsisting, and perhaps in an aggravated degree, he was, on the plea of non-attendance, dismissed the corporation.

The causes of this unhappy change in his circumstances cannot now, with the exception of the burthen of a large and increasing family, be ascertained; but it is probable, that to this period is to be referred, if there be any truth in the tradition, the report of Aubrey, that “ William Shakspeare’s father was a butcher.” This anecdote, he affirms, was received from the neighbours of the bard, and, on this account, merits some consideration.†

We are indebted to Mr. Rowe for the first intimation concerning the trade of John Shakspeare; his declaration, derived also from tradition, that he was a “ considerable dealer in wool,” appears confirmed by subsequent research. From a window in a room of the premises which originally formed part of the house at Stratford, in which Shakspeare the poet was born, and a part of which premises has for many years been occupied as a public-house, with the sign of the Swan and Maidenhead, a pane of glass was taken, about five-and-forty years ago, by Mr. Peyton, the then master of the adjoining Inn called The White Lion. This pane, now in the possession of his son, is nearly six inches in diameter, and perfect, and on it are painted the arms of the merchants of the wool-staple—“ Nebule on a chief gules, a lion passant or.” It appears, from the style in which it is finished, to have been executed about the time of Shakspeare, the father, and is undoubtedly a strong corroborative proof of the authenticity of Mr. Rowe’s relation.‡

These traditionary anecdotes, though apparently contradictory, may easily admit of reconciliation, if we consider, that between the employment of a wool-dealer and a butcher, there is no small affinity; “ few occupations,” observes Mr. Malone, “ can be named which are more naturally connected with each other.” § It is highly probable, therefore, that during the period of John Shakspeare’s distress, which we know to have existed in 1579, when our poet was but fifteen years of age, he might have had recourse to this more humble trade, as in many circumstances connected with his customary business, and as a great additional means of supporting a very numerous family.

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 58.

† MS. Aubrey, Mus. Ashmol. Oxon. Lives, p. 1. fol. 78, a. (Inter Cod. Dugdal.) Vide Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 213.

‡ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 214. and Ireland’s Picturesque Views on the Upper or Warwickshire Avon, p. 190, 191. Since this passage was written, however, the proof which it was supposed to contain, has been completely annihilated. “ If John Shakspeare’s occupation in life,” observes Mr. Wheeler, “ want confirmation, this circumstance will unfortunately not answer such a purpose; for old Thomas Hart constantly declared that his great uncle, Shakspeare Hart, a glazier of this town, who had the new glazing of the chapel windows, where it is known, from Dugdale, that such a shield existed, brought it from thence, and introduced it into his own window.”—Wheeler’s Guide to Stratford, pp. 13, 14.

§ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 214.

That the necessity for this union, however, did not exist towards the latter part of his life, there is much reason to imagine, both from the increasing reputation and affluence of his son William, and from the fact of his applying to the College of Heralds, in 1596 and 1599, for a grant of arms; events, of which the first, considering the character of the poet, must almost necessarily have led to, and the second directly pre-supposes, the possession of comparative competence and respectability.

The only remaining circumstance which time has spared us, relative to the personal conduct of John Shakspeare, is, that there appears some foundation to believe that, a short time previous to his death, he made a confession of his faith, or spiritual will; a document still in existence, the discovery and history of which, together with the declaration itself, will not improperly find a place at the close of this commencing chapter of our work.

About the year 1770, a master-bricklayer, of the name of Mosely, being employed by Mr. Thomas Hart, the fifth in descent, in a direct line, from the poet's sister, Joan Hart, to new-tile the house in which he then lived, and which is supposed to be that under whose roof the bard was born, found hidden between the rafters and the tiling of the house, a manuscript, consisting of six leaves, stitched together, in the form of a small book. This manuscript Mosely, who bore the character of an honest and industrious man, gave (without asking or receiving any recompense) to Mr. Peyton, an alderman of Stratford; and this gentleman very kindly sent it to Mr. Malone, through the medium of the Rev. Mr. Davenport, vicar of Stratford. It had, however, previous to this transmission, unfortunately been deprived of the first leaf, a deficiency which was afterwards supplied by the discovery, that Mosely, who had now been dead about two years, had copied a great portion of it, and from his transcription the introductory parts were supplied.* The daughter of Mosely and Mr. Hart, who were both living in the year 1790, agreed in a perfect recollection of the circumstances attending the discovery of this curious document, which consists of the following fourteen articles.

1. "In the name of God, the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost, the most holy and blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the holy host of archangels, angels, patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, apostles, saints, martyrs, and all the celestial court and company of heaven: I John Shakspear, an unworthy member of the holy Catholic religion, being at this my present writing in perfect health of body, and sound mind, memory, and understanding, but calling to mind the uncertainty of life and certainty of death, and that I may be possibly cut off in the blossome of my sins, and called to render an account of all my transgressions externally, and internally, and that I may be unprepared for the dreadful trial either by sacrament, pennance, fasting, or prayer, or any other purgation whatever, do in the holy presence above specified, of my own free and voluntary accord, make and ordaine this my last spiritual will, testament, confession, protestation, and confession of faith, hoping hereby to receive pardon for all my sinnes and offences, and thereby to be made partaker of life everlasting, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my saviour and redeemer, who took upon himself the likeness of man, suffered death, and was crucified upon the crosse, for the redemption of sinners.

2. "Item, I John Shakspear doe by this present protest, acknowledge, and confess, that in my past life I have been a most abominable and grievous sinner, and therefore unworthy to be forgiven without a true and sincere repentance for the same. But trusting in the manifold mercies of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer, I am encouraged, by relying on his sacred word, to hope for salvation, and be made partaker of his heavenly kingdom, as a member of the celestial company of angels, saints, and martyrs, there to reside for ever and ever in the court of my God.

3. "Item, I John Shakspear doe by this present protest and declare, that as I am certain I must passe out of this transitory life into another that will last to eternity, I do hereby most humbly implore and intreat my good and guardian angell to instruct me in this my solemn preparation, protestation, and confession of faith, at least spiritually, in will adoring and most humbly beseeching my Saviour, that he will be pleased to assist me in so dangerous a voyage,

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii, p. 197, 198.

to defend me from the snares and deceltes of my infernal enemies, and to conduct me to the secure haven of his eternal blisse.

4. "*Item*, I John Shakspear doe protest that I will also passe out of this life, armed with the last sacrament of extreme unction: the which if through any let or hindrance I should not then be able to have, I doe now also for that time demand and crave the same; beseeching his Divine Majesty that he will be pleased to anoynt my senses both internall and externall with the sacred oyle of his infinite mercy, and to pardon me alle my sins committed by seeing, speaking, feeling, smelling, hearing, touching, or by any other way whatsoever.

5. "*Item*, I John Shakspear doe by this present protest, that I will never through any temptation whatsoever despaire of the divine goodness, for the multitude and greatness of my sinnes; for which, although I confesse that I have deserved hell, yet will I steadfastly hope in God's infinite mercy, knowing that he hath heretofore pardoned many as great sinners as myself, whereof I have good warrant sealed with his sacred mouth, in holy writ, whereby he pronounceth that he is not come to call the just, but sinners.

6. "*Item*, I John Shakspear do protest, that I do not know that I have ever done any good worke meritorious of life everlasting: and if I have done any, I do acknowledge that I have done it with a great deale of negligence and imperfection; neither should I have been able to have done the least without the assistance of his divine grace. Wherefore let the devill remain confounded: for I doe in no wise presume to merit heaven by such good workes alone, but through the merits and bloud of my Lord and Saviour Jesus, shed upon the cross for me most miserable sinner.

7. "*Item*, I John Shakspear do protest by this present writing, that I will patiently endure and suffer all kind of infirmity, sickness, yea, and the paine of death itself: wherein if it should happen, which God forbid, that through violence of paine and agony, or by subtilty of the devill, I should fall into any impatience or temptation of blasphemy, or murmuration against God, or the Catholic faith, or give any signe of bad example, I do henceforth, and for that present, repent me, and am most heartily sorry for the same: and I do renounce all the evill whatsoever, which I might have then done or said; beseeching his divine clemency that he will not forsake me in that grievous and painefull agony.

8. "*Item*, I John Shakspear, by virtue of this present testament, I do pardon all the injuries and offences that any one hath ever done unto me, either in my reputation, life, goods, or any other way whatsoever; beseeching sweet Jesus to pardon them for the same; and I do desire that they will doe the like by me whome I have offended or injured in any sort howsoever.

9. "*Item*, I John Shakspear do here protest, that I do render infinite thanks to his Divine Majesty for all the benefits that I have received, as well secret as manifest, and in particular for the benefit of my creation, redemption, sanctification, conservation, and vocation to the holy knowledge of him and his true Catholic faith: but above all for his so great expectation of me to pennance, when he might most justly have taken me out of this life, when I least thought of it, yea, even then, when I was plunged in the durty puddle of my sinnes. Blessed be therefore and praised, for ever and ever, his infinite patience and charity.

10. "*Item*, I John Shakspear do protest, that I am willing, yea, I do infinitely desire and humbly crave, that of this my last will and testament the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, mother of God, refuge and advocate of sinners (whom I honour specially above all saints), may be the chiefe executresse, togeather with these other saints, my patrons (Saint Winefride), all whome I invoke and beseech to be present at the hour of my death, that she and they comfort me with their desired presence, and crave of sweet Jesus that he will receive my soul into peace.

11. "*Item*, In virtue of this present writing, I John Shakspear do likewise most willingly and with all humility constitute and ordaine my good angell for defender and protector of my soul in the dreadfull day of judgment, when the finall sentence of eternall life or death shall be discussed and given: beseeching him that, as my soule was appointed to his custody and protection when I lived, even so he will vouchsafe to defend the same at that houre, and conduct it to eternall bliss.

12. "*Item*, I John Shakspear do in like manner pray and beseech all my dear friends, parents, and kinsfolks, by the bowells of our Saviour Jesus Christ, that since it is uncertain what lot will befall me, for fear notwithstanding least by reason of my sinnes I be to pass and stay a long while in purgatory, they will vouchsafe to assist and succour me with their holy prayers and satisfactory workes, especially with the holy sacrifice of the masse, as being the most effectual means to deliver soules from their torments and paines; from the which, if I shall by God's gracious goodnesse, and by their vertuous workes, be delivered, I do promise that I will not be ungratefull unto them for so great a benefitt.

13. "*Item*, I John Shakspear doe by this my last will and testament bequeath my soul, as

as soon as it shall be delivered and loosened from the prison of this my body, to be entombed in the sweet and amorous coffin of the side of Jesus Christ; and that in this life-giving sepulcher it may rest and live, perpetually enclosed in that eternall habitation of repose, there to blesse for ever and ever that direful iron of the launce, which, like a charge in a censore, formes so sweet and pleasant a monument within the sacred breast of my Lord and Saviour.

14. *Item*, Lastly I John Shakspear doe protest, that I will willingly accept of death in what manner soever it may befall me, conforming my will unto the will of God; accepting of the same in satisfaction for my sinnes, and giving thanks unto his Divine Majesty for the life he hath bestowed upon me. And if it please him to prolong or shorten the same, blessed be he also a thousand thousand times; into whose most holy hands I commend my soul and body, my life and death: and I beseech him above all things, that he never permit any change to be made by me John Shakspear of this my aforesaid will and testament. Amen.

"I John Shakspeare have made this present writing of protestation, confession, and charter, in presence of the blessed Virgin Mary, my angell guardian, and all the celestial court, as witnesses hereunto: the which my meaning is, that it be of full value now presently and for ever with the force and vertue of testament, codicill, and donation in course of death; confirming it anew, being in perfect health of soul and body, and signed with mine own hand; carrying also the same about me, and for the better declaration hereof, my will and intention is that it be finally buried with me after my death.

"Pater noster, Ave maria, Credo.

"Jesu, son of David, have mercy on me.—Amen."*

If the intention of the testator, as expressed in the close of this will, were carried into effect, then, of course, the manuscript which Mosely found, must necessarily have been a copy of that which was buried in the grave of John Shakspeare.

Mr. Malone, to whom, in his edition of Shakspeare, printed in 1790, we are indebted for this singular paper, and for the history attached to it, observes, that he is unable to ascertain whether it was drawn up by John Shakspeare the father, or by John his *supposed* eldest son; but he says, "I have taken some pains to ascertain the authenticity of this manuscript, and, after a very careful inquiry, am perfectly satisfied that it is genuine."† In the "Inquiry," however, which he published in 1796, relative to the Ireland papers, he has given us, though without assigning any reasons for his change of opinion, a very different result: "In my conjecture," he remarks, "concerning the writer of that paper, I certainly was mistaken; for I have since obtained documents that clearly prove it could not have been the composition of any one of our poet's family."‡

In the "Apology" of Mr. George Chalmers "for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers," which appeared in the year subsequent to Mr. Malone's "Inquiry," a new light is thrown upon the origin of this confession. "From the sentiment, and the language, this confession appears to be," says this gentleman, "the effusion of a Roman Catholic mind, and was probably drawn up by some Roman Catholic priest. § If these premises be granted, it will follow, as a fair deduction, that the family of Shakspeare were Roman Catholics; a circumstance this, which is wholly consistent with what Mr. Malone is now studious to inculcate, viz. 'that this confession could not have been the composition of any of our poet's family.' The thoughts, the language, the orthography, all demonstrate the truth of my conjecture, though Mr. Malone did not perceive this truth, when he first published this paper in 1790. But it was the performance of a *clerke*, the undoubted work of the family-priest. The conjecture, that Shakspeare's family were Roman Catholics, is strengthened by the fact, that his father declined to attend the corporation meetings, and was at last removed from the corporate body."**

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 199 et seq.

† *Ibid.* p. 197.

‡ Malone's Inquiry, p. 198, 199.

§ As a specimen, let us take the beginning of this declaration of faith, and see still stronger terms in the conclusion of this protestation, *confession*, and charter.

** "The place too, the roof of the house, where this confession was found, proves, that it had been therein concealed, during times of persecution for the holy Catholic religion." Apology, p. 198, 199.

This conjecture of Mr. Chalmers appears to us in its leading points very plausible; for that the father of our poet might be a Roman Catholic is, if we consider the very unsettled state of his times with regard to religion, not only a possible but a probable supposition: in which case, it would undoubtedly have been the office of the spiritual director of the family to have drawn up such a paper as that which we have been perusing. It was the fashion also of the period, as Mr. Chalmers has subsequently observed, to draw up confessions of religious faith, a fashion honoured in the observance by the great names of Lord Bacon, Lord Burghley, and Archbishop Parker.* That he declined, however, attending the corporation meetings of Stratford from religious motives, and that his removal from that body was the result of non-attendance from *such a cause*, cannot readily be admitted; for we have clearly seen that his defection was owing to pecuniary difficulties; nor is it, in the least degree, probable that, after having honourably filled the highest offices in the corporation without scruple, he should at length, and in a reign too popularly protestant, incur expulsion from an avowed motive of this kind; especially as we have reason to suppose, from the mode in which this profession was concealed, that the tenets of the person whose faith it declares were cherished in secret.

From an accurate inspection of the hand-writing of this will, Mr. Malone infers that it cannot be attributed to an earlier period than the year 1600, † whence it follows that, if dictated by, or drawn up at the desire of, John Shakspeare, his death soon sealed the confession of his faith; for, according to the register, he was buried on September 8th, 1601.

Such are the very few circumstances which reiterated research has hitherto gleaned relative to the father of our poet; circumstances which, as being intimately connected with the history and character of his son, have acquired an interest of no common nature. Scanty as they must be pronounced, they lead to the conclusion that he was a moral and industrious man; that when fortune favoured him, he was not indolent, but performed the duties of a magistrate with respectability and effect, and that in the hour of adversity he exerted every nerve to support with decency a numerous family.

Before we close this chapter, it may be necessary to state, that the very orthography of the name of Shakspeare has occasioned much dispute. Of Shakspeare the father, no autograph exists; but the poet has left us several, and from these, and from the monumental inscriptions of his family, must the question be decided; the latter, as being of the least authority, we shall briefly mention, as exhibiting, in Dugdale, three varieties,—Shakespeare, Shakespere, and Shakspeare. The former present us with *five* specimens which, singular as it may appear, all vary, either in the mode of writing or mode of spelling. The first is annexed to a mortgage executed by the poet in 1613, and appears thus, Wm Shakspea: the second is from a deed of bargain and sale, relative to the same transaction, and of the same period, and signed, William Shaksper: the third, fourth and fifth are taken from the Will of Shakspeare executed in March, 1616, consisting of three briefs or sheets, to each of which his name is subscribed. These signatures, it is remarkable, differ considerably, especially in the surnames; for in the first brief we find William Shackspere; in the second, Willm Shakspe re, and in the third, William Shakspeare. It has been supposed, however, that, according to the practice in Shakspeare's time, the name in the first sheet was written by the scrivener who drew the will.

In the year 1790, Mr. Malone, from an inspection of the mortgage, pronounced the genuine orthography to be Shakspeare; ‡ in 1796, from consulting the deed of sale, he altered his opinion, and declared that the poet's own mode of spelling his name was, beyond a possibility of doubt, that of Shakespere, though for reasons

* Chalmer's Apology, p. 200.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 149.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 198.

which he should assign in a subsequent publication, he should still continue to write the name Shakspeare.*

To this decision, relative to the genuine orthography, Mr. Chalmers cannot accede; and for this reason, that, "when the testator subscribed his name, for the last time, he plainly wrote Shakspeare."†

It is obvious, therefore, that the controversy turns upon, whether there be, or be not, an *a* introduced in the second syllable of the last signature of the poet. Mr. Malone, on the suggestion of an anonymous correspondent, thinks that there is not, this gentleman having clearly shown him, "that though there was a superfluous stroke when the poet came to write the letter *r* in his last signature, probably from the tremor of his hand, there was no *a* discoverable in that syllable; and that this name, like both the other, was written Shakspeare."‡

From the plate of autographs, which is to be found in Mr. Chalmers's Apology, and which presents us with very perfect fac-similes of the signatures, it is at once evident, that the assertion of the anonymous correspondent, that the last signature, "*like both the other*, was written Shakspeare," cannot be correct; for the surname in the first brief is written Shackspere, and, in the second, Shakspe re. Now the *hiatus* in this second signature is unaccounted for in the fac-simile given by Mr. Malone §; but in the plate of Mr. Chalmers it is found to have been occasioned by the intrusion of the word *the* of the preceding line, a circumstance which, very probably, might prevent the introduction of the controverted letter. It is likewise, we think, very evident that something more than a superfluous stroke exists between the *e* and *r* of the last signature, and that the variation is, indeed, too material to have originated from any supposed tremor of the hand.

Upon the whole, it may, we imagine, be safely reposed on as a fact, that Shakspeare was not uniform in the orthography of his own name; that he sometimes spelt it Shakspeare and sometimes Shakspeare; but that no other variation is extant which can claim a similar authority.** It is, therefore, nearly a matter of

* Malone's Inquiry, p. 120.

† *Ibid.* pp. 117, 118.

‡ Chalmers's Apology, p. 235.

§ Inquiry, Plate II. No. 12.

** A want of uniformity in the spelling of names, was a species of negligence very common in the time of Shakspeare, and may be observed, remarks Mr. Chalmers, "with regard to the principal poets of that age; as we may see in *England's Parnassus*, a collection of poetry which was published in 1600: thus,

Sydney
Spenser
Jonson
Dekker
Markeham
Sylvister
Sackwill
Fitz Geoffrey
France.
Middleton
Guilpin
Achelly
Drayton
Daniel
Davis
Marlow
Marston
Fairefax
Kid

Sidney.
Spencer.
Johnson.
Dekkar.
Markham.
Sylvester.
Sackuil.
Fitzjeffry.
Fraunce.
Middleton.
Gilpin.
Achely.
Draiton.
Daniel.
Davies.
Marlowe.
Murston.
Fairfax.
Kyd.

Jhonson.

Silvester.

Fitz Jeffray

Achilly.

Achillye.

Yet, it is remarkable, that in this collection of diversities, our dramatist's name is uniformly spelt Shakspeare: in whatever manner this celebrated name may have been pronounced in Warwickshire, it certainly was spoken in London, with the *e* soft, thus, Shakespeare: in the registers of the Stationers' Company, it is written, *Shakespere*, and *Shakespeare*." Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, pp. 129, 130.

A curious proof of the uncertain orthography of the poet's surname among his contemporaries and immediate successors, may be drawn from a pamphlet, entitled, "The great Assizes holden in Parnassus by Apollo and his Assessours: at which Sessions are arraigned, Mercurius Britannicus, etc. etc. London: Printed by Richard Cotes for Edward Husbards, and are to be sold at his shop in the Middle Temple. 1645. qto. 25 leaves.

In this rare tract, among the list of the jurors is found the name of our bard, written William *Shakespere*; and in the body of the poem, it is given *Shakespeare*, and *Shakespear*. Vide British Bibliographer vol. i. p. 513.

indifference which of *these two* modes of spelling we adopt ; yet, as his last signature appears to have included the letter *a*, it may, for the sake of consistency, be proper silently to acquiesce in its admission.

CHAPTER II.

The House in which Shakspeare was born—Plague at Stratford, June 1564—Shakspeare educated at the Free-school of Stratford—State of Education, and of Juvenile Literature in the Country at this period—Extent of Shakspeare's acquirements as a Scholar.

THE experience of the last half century has fully proved, that every thing relative to the history of our immortal dramatist has been received, and received justly too, by the public with an avidity proportional to his increasing fame. What, if recorded of a less celebrated character, might be deemed very uninteresting, immediately acquires, when attached to the mighty name of Shakspeare, an importance nearly unparalleled. No apology, therefore, can be necessary for the introduction of any fact or circumstance, however minute, which is, in the slightest degree, connected with his biography ; tradition, indeed, has been so sparing of her communications on this subject, that every addition to her little store has been hitherto welcomed with the most lively sensation of pleasure, nor will the attempt to collect and embody these scattered fragments be unattended with its reward.

The birth-place of our poet, the spot where he drew the first breath of life, where Fancy

— fed the little prattler, and with songs
Oft sooth'd his wond'ring ears,

has been the object of laudable curiosity to thousands, and happily the very roof that sheltered his infant innocence can still be pointed out. It stands in Henley-street, and, though at present forming two separate tenements, was originally but one house.* The premises are still in possession of the Hart family, *now* the *seventh* descendants, in a direct line, from Jone the sister of the poet. From the plate in Reed's Shakspeare, which is a correct representation of the existing state of this humble but interesting dwelling, it will appear, that one portion of it is occupied by the Swan and Maidenhead public-house, and the other by a butcher's shop, in which the son of old Mr. Thomas Hart, mentioned in the last chapter, still carries on his father's trade.† “The kitchen of this house,” says Mr. Samuel

* It is with some apprehension of imposition that I quote the following passage from Mr. Samuel Ireland's Picturesque Views on the River Avon. This gentleman, the father of the youth who endeavoured so grossly to deceive the public by the fabrication of a large mass of MSS which he attributed to Shakspeare, was undoubtedly, at the time he wrote this book, the complete dupe of his son ; and though, as a man of veracity and integrity, to be depended upon with regard to what originated from himself, it is possible, that the settlement which he quotes may have been derived from the same ample store-house of forgery which produced the folio volume of miscellaneous papers, &c. This settlement, in the possession of Mr. Ireland, is brought forward as a proof that the premises in Henley-street were certainly in the occupation of John Shakspeare, the father of the poet ; it is dated August 14th, third of Elizabeth, 1591, and Mr. Ireland professes to give the substance of it in the subsequent terms :—“That George Badger, senior, of Stratford upon Avon, conveys to John and William Court, yeoman, and their heirs, in trust, &c. a messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances in Stratford upon Avon in a certain streete called Henley-streete, between the house of Robert Johnson on the one part, and the house of John Shakspeare on the other ; and also two selions (*i. e.* ridges, or ground between furrows) of land lying between the land of Tomas Combe, Gent. on the one hand, and Thomas Reynolde, Gent. on the other.” It is regularly executed, and livery of seisin on the 29th of the same month and year indorsed”. P. 195, 196.

† See the title page of the first volume of Baudry's edition of Shakspeare's Complete Works.

“In a lower room of this public-house,” says Mr. Samuel Ireland, “which is part of the premises wherein Shakspeare was born, is a curious antient ornament over the chimney, relieved in plaister, which from the date, 1606, that was originally marked on it, was probably put up at the time, and possibly by the

Ireland, "has an appearance sufficiently interesting, abstracted from its claim to notice as relative to the Bard. It is a subject very similar to those that so frequently employed the rare talents of Ostade, and therefore cannot be deemed unworthy the pencil of an inferior artist. In the corner of the chimney stood an old oak-chair, which had for a number of years received nearly as many adorers as the celebrated shrine of the Lady of Loretto. This relic was purchased, in July, 1790, by the Princess Czartoryska, who made a journey to this place, in order to obtain intelligence relative to Shakspeare; and being told he had often sat in this chair, she placed herself in it, and expressed an ardent wish to become a purchaser; but being informed that it was not to be sold at any price, she left a handsome gratuity to old Mrs. Hart, and left the place with apparent regret. About four months after, the anxiety of the Princess could no longer be withheld, and her secretary was dispatched express, as the fit agent, to purchase this treasure at any rate: the sum of twenty guineas was the price fixed on, and the secretary and chair, with a proper certificate of its authenticity on stamped paper, set off in a chaise for London." * The elder Mr. Hart, who died about the year 1794, aged sixty-seven, informed Mr. Samuel Ireland, that he well remembered, when a boy, having dressed himself, with some of his playfellows, as Scaramouches (such was his phrase), in the wearing-apparel of Shakspeare; an anecdote of which, if we consider the lapse of time, it may be allowed us to doubt the credibility, and to conclude that the recollection of Mr. Hart had deceived him.

Little more than two months had passed over the head of the infant Shakspeare, when he became exposed to danger of such an imminent kind, that we have reason to rejoice he was not snatched from us even while he lay in the cradle. He was born, as we have already recorded, on the 23d of April, 1564; and on the 30th of the June following, the plague broke out at Stratford, the ravages of which dreadful disease were so violent, that between this last date and the close of December, not less than two hundred and thirty-eight persons perished;

"Of which number," remarks Mr. Malone, "probably two hundred and sixteen died of that malignant distemper; and one only of the whole number resided, not in Stratford, but in the neighbouring town of Welcombe. From the two hundred and thirty-seven inhabitants of Stratford, whose names appear in the Register, twenty-one are to be subducted, who, it may be presumed, would have died in six months, in the ordinary course of nature; for in the five preceding years, reckoning, according to the style of that time, from March 25, 1559, to March 26, 1564, two hundred and twenty-one persons were buried at Stratford, of whom two hundred and ten were townsmen; that is, of these latter, forty-two died each year at an average. Supposing one in thirty-five to have died annually, the total number of the inhabitants of Stratford at that period was one thousand four hundred and seventy; and consequently the plague, in the last six months of the year 1564, carried off more than a seventh part of them. Fortunately for mankind it did not reach the house in which the infant Shakspeare lay; for not one of that name appears in the dead list. May we suppose, that, like Horace, he lay secure and fearless in the

poet himself: although a rude attempt at historic presentation, I have yet thought it worth copying, as it has, I believe, passed unnoticed by the multitude of visitors that have been on this spot, or at least has never been made public: and to me it was enough that it held a conspicuous place in the dwelling-house of one who is himself the ornament and pride of the island he inhabited. In 1759, it was repaired and painted in a variety of colours by the old Mr. Thomas Harte before-mentioned, who assured me the motto then round it had been in the old black letter, and dated 1606. The motto runs thus:

Golîth comes with sword and spear,
And Davîd with a sling:
Although Golîth rage and swear,
Down Davîd doth him bring." Picturesque Views, p. 192, 193.

* Picturesque Views, p. 189, 190. It is probable that Mr. Ireland, though, it appears, unconnected with the forgeries of his son, might, during his tour, be too eager in crediting the tales which were told him. One Jordan, a native of Alverton near Stratford, was for many years the usual *cicerone* to enquirers after Shakspeare, and was esteemed not very accurate in weighing the authenticity of the anecdotes which he related.

midst of contagion and death, protected by the Muses, to whom his future life was to be devoted, and covered over :—

————— *sacrâ*
Lauroque, collataque myrto,
*Non sine Diis animosus infans.**

It is now impossible to ascertain with any degree of certainty the mode which was adopted in the education of this aspiring genius ; all that time has left us on the subject is, that he was sent, though but for a short period, to the free-school of Stratford, a seminary founded in the reign of Henry the Sixth, by the Rev.—Jolepe, M. A., a native of the town ; and which, after sharing, at the general dissolution of chantries, religious houses, etc. the usual fate, was restored and patronised by Edward the Sixth, a short time previous to his death. Here it was, that he acquired the small Latin and less Greek, which Jonson has attributed to him, a mode of phraseology from which it must be inferred, that he was at least acquainted with both languages ; and, perhaps, we may add, that he who has obtained some knowledge of Greek, however slight, may, with little hesitation, be supposed to have proceeded considerably beyond the limits of mere elementary instruction in Latin.

At the period when Shakspeare was sent to school, the study of the classical languages had made, since the era of the revival of literature, a very rapid progress. Grammars and Dictionaries, by various authors, had been published ;† but the grammatical institute then in general use, both in town and country, was the Grammar of Henry the Eighth, which, by the order of Queen Elizabeth, in her Injunctions of 1559, was admitted, to the exclusion of all others : “ Every schoolmaster,” says the thirty-ninth Injunction, “ shall teach the grammar set forth by King Henrie the Eighth, of noble memorie, and continued in the time of Edward the Sixth, and none other ;” and in the Booke of certain Cannons, 1571, it is again directed, “ that no other grammar shall be taught, but only that which the Queen’s Majestie hath commanded to be read in all schooles, through the whole realm.”

With the exception of Wolsey’s “ Rudimenta Grammatices,” printed in 1536, and taught in his school at Ipswich, and a similar work of Collet’s, established in his seminary in St. Paul’s churchyard, this was the grammar publicly and universally adopted, and without doubt the instructor of Shakspeare in the language of Rome.

Another initiatory work, which we may almost confidently affirm him to have studied under the tuition of the master of the free-school at Stratford, was the production of one Ockland, and entitled EIPHNAPXIA, *sive* ELIZABETHA. The object of this book, which is written in Latin verse, is to panegyrisé the characters

* Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 84, 85.

† It is possible also that the following grammars and dictionaries, independent of those mentioned in the text, may have contributed to the school-education of Shakspeare :

1. Certain brief Rules of the Regiment or Construction of the Eight Partes of Speche, in English and Latin, 1537.

2. A short Introduction of Grammar, generallie to be used : compiled and set forth, for the bringyng up of all those that intend to attaine the knowledge of the Latin tongue, 1557.

3. The Scholemaster ; or, Plaine and perfitte Way of teaching Children to understand, write, and speak, the Latin Tong. By Roger Ascham. 1571.

4. Abecedarium Anglico-Latinum, pro tyrunculis, Ricardo Huloets exscriptore, 1552.

5. The Short Dictionary, 1558.

6. A little Dictionary ; compiled by J. Withals, 1559. Afterwards reprinted in 1568, 1572, 1579, and 1599 ; and entitled, A Shorte Dictionarie most profitable for young Beginners : and subsequently, A shorte Dictionarie in Lat. and English.

7. The brefe Dyxcyonary, 1562.

8. Huloets Dictionary ; newlye corrected, amended, and enlarged, by John Higgins, 1572.

9. Veron’s Dictionary ; Latin and English, 1575.

10. An Alvearie, or quadruple Dictionarie ; containing foure sundrie Tongues : namelie, English, Latine, Greeke, and Frenche. Newlie enriched with varietie of wordes, phrases, proverbs, and divers lightsome observations of grammar. By John Baret, 1580.

11. Rider’s Dictionary, Latine and English, 1589.

and government of Elizabeth and her ministers, and it was, therefore, enjoined by authority to be read as a classic in every grammar-school, and to be indelibly impressed upon the memory of every young scholar in the kingdom; "a matchless contrivance," remarks Bishop Hurd, "to imprint a sense of loyalty on the minds of the people."*

To these school-books, to which, being introduced by compulsory edicts, there is no doubt Shakspeare was indebted for some learning and much loyalty, may be added, as another resource to which he was directed by his master, the Dictionary of Sir Thomas Elliot, declaring Latin by English, as greatly improved and enriched by Thomas Cooper in 1552. This lexicon, the most copious and celebrated of its day, was received into almost every school, and underwent numerous editions, namely, in 1559, and in 1565, under the title of "*Thesaurus Linguae Romanæ et Britannicæ*," and again in 1573, 1578, and 1584. Elizabeth not only recommended the lexicon of Cooper, and professed the highest esteem for him, in consequence of the great utility of his work toward the promotion of classical literature, but she more substantially expressed her opinion of his worth by promoting him to the deanery of Gloucester, in 1569, and to the bishoprics of Lincoln and Winchester in 1570 and 1584, at which latter see he died on the 29th of April, 1524.†

Thus far we may be allowed, on good grounds, to trace the very books which were placed in the hands of Shakspeare, during his short noviciate in classical learning; to proceed farther, would be to indulge in mere conjecture, but we may add, and with every just reason for the inference, that from these productions, and from the few minor classics which he had time to study at this seminary, all that the most precocious genius, at such a period of life, and under so transient a direction of the mind to classic lore, could acquire, was obtained.‡

The universality of classical education about the era of 1575, when, it is probable, Shakspeare had not long entered on the acquisitions of the Latin elements, was such that no person of rank or property could be deemed accomplished who had not been thoroughly imbued with the learning and mythology of Greece and Rome. The knowledge which had been previously confined to the clergy or professed scholars, became now diffused among the nobility and gentry, and even influenced, in a considerable degree, the minds and manners of the softer sex. Elizabeth herself led the way in this career of erudition, and she was soon followed by the ladies of her court, who were taught, as Warton observes, not only to distil strong waters, but to construe Greek.§

* Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. ii. p. 28. edit. 1788.

† That school-masters and lexicographers were not usually so well rewarded, notwithstanding the high value placed on classical literature at this period, may be drawn from the complaint of Ascham: "It is pitie," says he, "that commonlie more care is had, yea, and that amonge verie wise men, to find out rather a cunnyng man for their horse, than a cunnyng man for their children. They say nay in worde, but they do so in deede. For, to the one they will gladlie give a stipend of 200 crownes by yeare, and loth to offer to the other 200 shillings. God, that sitteth in heaven, laugheth their choice to skorne, and rewardeth their liberalitie as it should; for he suffereth them to have tame and well ordered horse, but wilde and unfortunate children; and therefore, in the ende, they finde more pleasure in their horse than comforte in their children."—Ascham's Works, Bennet's edition, p. 212.

‡ It is more than possible that the Eclogues of Mantuanus the Carmelite may have been one of the school-books of Shakspeare. He is familiarly quoted and praised in the following passage from Love's Labour's Lost:

"Hol. *Fauste, precor gelidâ quando pecus omne sub umbrâ Ruminat*,—and so forth. Ah, good old Mantua! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice:

———— *Vinegia, Vinegia,
Chi non te rede, ci non te pregia.*

Old Mantuan! old Mantuan! who understandeth thee not, loves thee not." Act iv. sc. 2. And his Eclogues, be it remembered, were translated and printed, together with the Latin on the opposite page, for the use of schools, before the commencement of our author's education; and from a passage quoted by Mr Malone, from Nashe's *Apologie of Pierce Penniless*, 1593, appear to have continued in use long after its termination. "With the first and second leafe, he plaies very prettilic, and, in ordinarie terms of extenuating, veridits Pierce Pennillesse for a grammar-school wit; saies, his margiae is as deeply learned as, *Fauste, precor gelidâ*." Mantuanus was translated by George Turberville in 1567, and reprinted in 1594.—Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 95.

§ Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 491.

The fashion of the court speedily became, to a certain extent, the fashion of the country, and every individual possessed of a decent competency, was solicitous that his children should acquire the literature in vogue. Had the father of our poet continued in prosperous circumstances, there is every reason to conclude that his son would have had the opportunity of acquiring the customary erudition of the times; but we have already seen, that in 1579 he was so reduced in fortune, as to be excused a weekly payment of 4*d.*, a state of depression which had no doubt existed some time before it attracted the notice of the corporation of Stratford.

One result therefore of these pecuniary difficulties was the removal of young Shakspeare from the free-school, an event which has occasioned, among his biographers and numerous commentators, much controversy and conjecture as to the extent of his classical attainments.

From the short period which tradition allows us to suppose that our poet continued under the instruction of a master, we have a right to conclude that, notwithstanding his genius and industry, he must necessarily have made a very superficial acquaintance with the learned languages. That he was called home to assist his father, we are told by Mr. Rowe; and consequently, as the family was numerous and under the pressure of poverty, it is not likely that he found much time to prosecute what he had commenced at school. The accounts, therefore, which have descended to us, on the authority of Ben Jonson, Drayton, Suckling, etc. that he had not much learning, that he depended almost exclusively on his native genius (that his Latin was small and his Greek less), ought to have been, without scruple, admitted. Fuller, who was a diligent and accurate enquirer, has given us in his *Worthies*, printed in 1662, the most full and express opinion on the subject. "He was an eminent instance," he remarks, "of the truth of that rule, '*Poeta non fit, sed nascitur*;' "one is not *made* but *born* a poet. Indeed his learning was very little, so that as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so nature itself was all the art which was used upon him."*

Notwithstanding this uniform assertion of the contemporaries and immediate successors of Shakspeare, relative to his very imperfect knowledge of the languages of Greece and Rome, many of his modern commentators have strenuously insisted upon his intimacy with both, among whom may be enumerated, as the most zealous and decided on this point, the names of Gildon, Sewell, Pope, Upton, Grey, and Whalley. The dispute, however, has been nearly, if not altogether terminated, by the Essay of Dr. Farmer on the Learning of Shakspeare, who has, by a mode of research equally ingenious and convincing, clearly proved that all the passages which had been triumphantly brought forward as instances of the classical literature of Shakspeare, were taken from translations, or from original, and once popular, productions in his native tongue. Yet the conclusion drawn from this essay, so far as it respects the portion of latinity which our poet had acquired and preserved, as the result of his school-education, appears to us greatly too restricted. "He remembered," says the Doctor, "perhaps enough of his school-boy learning to put the Hig, hag, hog, into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evan: and might pick up in the writers of the time, or the course of his conversation, a familiar phrase or two of French or Italian: but his studies were most demonstratively confined to nature and his own language."†

A very late writer, in combating this part of the *conclusion* of Dr. Farmer, has advanced an opinion in several respects so similar to our own, that it will be necessary, in justice to him and previous to any further expansion of the idea which we have embraced, to quote his words.

"Notwithstanding," says he, "Dr. Farmer's essay on the deficiency of Shakspeare in learning, I must acknowledge myself to be one who does not conceive that his proofs of that fact sufficiently warrant his conclusions from them: 'that his *studies* were demonstrably confined to

* *Worthies*, v. iii. p. 126.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 85.

nature and his own language' is, as Dr. Farmer concludes, true enough; but when it is added, 'that he only picked up in conversation a familiar phrase or two of French, or remembered enough of his school-boy's learning to put *hig, hag, hog*, in the mouths of others:' he seems to me to go beyond any evidence produced by him of so little knowledge of languages in Shakspeare. He proves indeed sufficiently, that Shakspeare chiefly read English books, by his copying sometimes minutely the very errors made in them, many of which he might have corrected, if he had consulted the original Latin books made use of by those writers: but this does not prove that he was not able to read Latin well enough to examine those originals if he chose; it only proves his indolence and indifference about accuracy in minute articles of no importance to the chief object in view of supplying himself with subjects for dramatic compositions. Do we not every day meet with numberless instances of similar and much greater oversights by persons well skilled in Greek as well as Latin, and professed critics also of the writings and abilities of others? If Shakspeare made an ignorant man pronounce the French word *bras* like the English *brass*, and evidently on purpose, as being a probable mistake by such an unlearned speaker, has not one learned modern in writing Latin made *Paginibus* of *Paginis*, and another mentioned a person as being born in the reign of Charles the First, and yet as dying in 1600, full twenty-five years before the accession of that king? Such mistakes arise not from ignorance, but a heedless inattention, while their thoughts are better occupied with more important subjects; as those of Shakspeare were with forming his plots and his characters, instead of examining critically a great Greek volume to see whether he ought to write *on this side of Tiber or on that side of Tiber*; which however very possibly he might not be able to read; but Latin was more universally learnt in that age, and even by women, many of whom could both write and speak it; therefore it is not likely that he should be so very deficient in that language, as some would persuade us, by evidence which does not amount to sufficient proofs of the fact. Nay, even although he had a sufficiency of Latin to understand any Latin book, if he chose to do it, yet how many in modern times, under the same circumstances, are led by mere indolence to prefer translations of them, in case they cannot read Latin with such perfect ease, as never to be at a loss for the meaning of a word, so as to be forced to read some sentences twice over before they can understand them rightly. That Shakspeare was not an eminent Latin scholar may be very true, but that he was so totally ignorant as to know nothing more than *hie, hæc, hoc*, must have better proofs before I can be convinced." *

The truth seems to be, that Shakspeare, like most boys who have spent but two or three years at a grammar-school, acquired just as much Latin as would enable him, with the assistance of a lexicon, and no little share of assiduity, to construe a minor classic; a degree of acquisition which we every day see, unless forwarded by much leisure and much private industry, immediately becomes stationary, and soon retrograde. Our poet, when taken from the free-school of Stratford, had not only to direct his attention to business, in order to assist in warding off from his father's family the menacing approach of poverty; but it is likewise probable that his leisure, as we shall notice more at large in the next chapter, was engaged in other acquisitions; and when at a subsequent period, and after he had become a married man, his efforts were thrown into a channel perfectly congenial to his taste and talents, still to procure subsistence for the day was the immediate stimulus to exertion. Under these circumstances, and when we likewise recollect that popular favour and applause were essential to his success, and that nearly to the last period of his life he was a prolific caterer for the public in a species of poetry which called for no recondite or learned resources, it is not probable, nay, it is, indeed, scarcely possible, that he should have had time to cultivate and increase his classical attainments, originally and necessarily superficial. To translations, therefore, and to popular and legendary lore, he was alike directed by policy, by inclination, and by want of leisure; yet must we still agree, that, had a proficiency in the learned languages been necessary to his career, the means resided within himself, and that, on the basis merely of his school-education, although limited as we have seen it, he might, had he early and steadily directed his attention to the subject, have built the reputation of a scholar.

That the powers, however, of his vast and capacious mind, especially if we

* *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 225.

consider the shortness of his life, were not expended on such a attempt, we have reason to rejoice; for though his attainments, as a linguist, were truly trifling, yet his knowledge was great, and his learning, in the best sense of the term, that is, as distinct from the mere acquisition of language, multifarious, and extensive beyond that of most of his contemporaries. *

It is, therefore, to his English studies that we must have recourse for a due estimate of his reading and research; a subject which will be treated of in a future portion of the work.

CHAPTER III.

Shakspeare, after leaving School, follows his Father's Trade—Statement of Aubrey—Probably present in his Twelfth Year at Kenilworth, when Elizabeth visited the Earl of Leicester—Tradition of Aubrey concerning him—Whether there is reason to suppose that, after leaving his Father, he was placed in an Attorney's Office, who was likewise Seneschal or Steward of some Manor—Anecdotes of Shakspeare—Allusions in his Works to Barton, Wilnecotte, and Barston, Villages in Warwickshire—Earthquake in 1580 alluded to—Whether, after leaving School, he acquired any Knowledge of the French and Italian languages.

THAT Shakspeare, when taken from the free-school of Stratford, became an assistant to his father in the wool-trade, has been the general opinion of his biographers from the period of Mr. Rowe, who first published the tradition in 1709, to the present day. The anecdote was probably collected by Mr. Betterton the player, who visited Stratford in order to procure intelligence relative to his favourite poet, and from whom Mr. Rowe professes to have derived the greater part of his information.† A few incidental circumstances tend also to strengthen the account that both father and son were engaged in this employment, and, for a time, together: in the first place, we may mention the discovery already noticed of the arms of the merchants of the wool-staple on a window of the house in which the poet was born‡; secondly, the almost certain conclusion that the poverty of John Shakspeare, which we know to have been considerable in 1579, would naturally incline him to require the assistance of his son, in the only way in which, at that time, he could be serviceable to him; and thirdly, we may

* "If it were asked from what sources," observes Mr. Capel Lofft, "Shakspeare drew these abundant streams of wisdom, carrying with their current the fairest and most unfading flowers of poetry, I should be tempted to say, he had what would be now considered a very reasonable portion of Latin; he was not wholly ignorant of Greek; he had a knowledge of the French, so as to read it with ease; and I believe not less of the Italian. He was habitually conversant in the chronicles of his country. He lived with wise and highly cultivated men; with Jonson, Essex, and Southampton, in familiar friendship. He had deeply imbibed the Scriptures. And his own most acute, profound, active, and original genius (for there never was a truly great poet, nor an aphoristic writer of excellence without these accompanying qualities) must take the lead in the solution." Aphorisms from Shakspeare: Introduction, p. xii and xiii.

Again, in speaking of his poems, he remarks—"Transcendent as his original and singular genius was, I think it is not easy, with due attention to *these* poems, to doubt of his having acquired, when a boy, no ordinary facility in the *classic* language of Rome; though his knowledge of it might be small, comparatively, to the knowledge of that great and indefatigable scholar, Ben Jonson. And when Jonson says he had 'less Greek,' had it been true that he had none, it would have been as easy for the verse as for the sentiment to have said 'no Greek.'"—Introduction, p. xxiv.

† "Mr Betterton," observes Mr Malone, "was born in 1635, and had many opportunities of collecting information relative to Shakspeare, but unfortunately the age in which he lived was not an age of curiosity. Had either he or Dryden or Sir William d'Avenant taken the trouble to visit our poet's youngest daughter, who lived till 1662, or his grand-daughter, who did not die till 1670, many particulars might have been preserved which are now irrecoverably lost. Shakspeare's sister, Jone Hart, who was only five years younger than him, died at Stratford in Nov. 1646, at the age of seventy-six; and from her undoubtedly his two daughters, and his grand-daughter Lady Bernard, had learned several circumstances of his early history antecedent to the year 1600." Reed's Shakspeare, p. 119, 120.

‡ It has already been observed, in a note written some years after the composition of the text, that this supposed corroboration is no longer to be depended upon.

adduce the following passages from the works of our Dramatist, which seem to imply a more than theoretic intimacy with his father's business. In the *Winter's Tale*, the Clown exclaims,

"Let me see:—Every 'leven wether—tods; every tod yields—pound and odd shilling: fifteen hundred shorn—What comes the wool to?" *Act IV. Scene 2.*

Upon this passage Dr. Farmer remarks, "that to *tod* is used as a verb by dealers in wool; thus, they say, 'Twenty sheep ought to tod fifty pounds of wool,' etc. The meaning, therefore, of the Clown's words is, 'Every eleven wether tods; i. e. will produce a tod, or twenty-eight pounds of wool; every tod yields a pound and some odd shillings; what then will the wool of fifteen hundred yield?'"

"The occupation of his father," subjoins Mr. Malone, "furnished our poet with accurate knowledge on this subject; for two pounds and a half of wool is, I am told, a very good produce from a sheep at the time of shearing."

"Every 'leven wether—tods," adds Mr. Ritson, "has been rightly expounded to mean that the wool of eleven sheep would weigh a tod, or 28lb. Each fleece would, therefore, be 2lb. 8oz. 11½dr., and the whole produce of fifteen hundred shorn 136 tod, 1 clove, 2lb. 6oz. 2dr. which at pound and odd shilling per tod, would yield 143*l.* 3*s.* 0*d.* Our author was too familiar with the subject to be suspected of inaccuracy.

"Indeed it appears from Stafford's "*Breefe Concepte of English Pollicye*," 1518, p. 16, that the price of a tod of wool was at that period twenty or two-and-twenty shillings: so that the medium price was exactly 'pound and odd shilling.'"^{*}

In *Hamlet*, the prince justly observes,

There's a divinity that *shapes our ends*,
Roughhew them how we will.

Act V. Scene 2.

Lines, of which the words in italics were considered by Dr. Farmer as merely technical. "A woolman, butcher, and dealer in *skewers*," says Mr. Steevens, "lately observed to him (Dr. F)., that his nephew, an idle lad, could only assist him in making them; '—he could roughhew them, but I was obliged to shape their ends.' To shape the ends of wool-skewers, i. e. to point them, requires a degree of skill; any one can roughhew them. Whoever recollects the profession of Shakspeare's father, will admit that his son might be no stranger to such terms. I have frequently seen packages of wool pinned up with *skewers*."[†]

We may, therefore, after duly considering all the evidence that can now be obtained, pretty confidently acquiesce in the traditional account that Shakspeare was, for a time, and that immediately on his being taken from the free-school, the assistant of his father in the wool-trade; but it will be necessary here to mention, that Aubrey, on whose authority it has been related that John Shakspeare was, at one period of his life, a butcher, adds, with regard to our poet, that "when he was a boy, he exercised his father's trade;" and that "when he killed a calf, he would do it in a high style, and make a speech."[‡] That John Shakspeare, when under the pressure of adversity, might combine the two employments, which are, in a certain degree, connected with each other, we have already recorded as probable; it is very possible, also, that the following similes may have been suggested to the son, by what he had occasionally observed at home:

And as the butcher takes away the calf,
And binds the wretch, and beats it when it strays,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house;
Even so, remorseless, have they borne him hence.

^{*} Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 322, 323.

[†] MS.—Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 213.

[‡] *Ibid.* vol. xviii. p. 346, 347.

And as the dam runs lowing up and down,
 Looking the way her harmless young one went,
 And can do nought but wail her darling's loss ;
 Even so, &c. &c.

Henry IV. Part II. Act III. sc. 1.

but that the father of our poet, the former bailiff of Stratford, should employ his children, instead of servants, in the slaughter of his cattle, is a position so revolting, so unnecessarily degrading on the part of the father, and, at the same time, must have been so discordant with the well-known humane and gentle cast of the poet's disposition, that we cannot, for a moment, allow ourselves to conceive that any credibility can be attached to such a report.

At what age he began to assist his father in the wool-trade, cannot now be positively ascertained ; but as he was early taken from school, for this purpose, we shall probably not err far, if we suppose this change to have taken place when he was *twelve* years old ; a computation which includes a period of scholastic education sufficiently long to have imbued him with just such a portion of classical lore, as an impartial enquirer into his life and works would be willing to admit.

A short time previous to this, when our poet was in his twelfth year, and in the summer of 1575, an event occurred which must have made a great impression on his mind ; the visit of Queen Elizabeth to the magnificent Earl of Leicester, at Kenelworth Castle. That young Shakspeare was a spectator of the festivities on this occasion, was first suggested by Bishop Percy,* who, in his *Essay on the Origin of the English Stage*, speaking of the old Coventry play of Hock Tuesday, which was performed before Her Majesty during her residence at the castle, observes.—

“ Whatever this old play, or ‘ storial show,’ was at the time it was exhibited to Queen Elizabeth, it had probably our young Shakspeare for a spectator, who was then in his twelfth year, and doubtless attended with all the inhabitants of the surrounding country at these ‘ Princely Pleasures of Kenelworth,’† *whence Stratford is only a few miles distant.* And as the Queen was much diverted with the Coventry play, ‘ whereat Her Majestic laught well,’ and rewarded the performers with two bucks, and five marks in money : who, ‘ what rejoicing upon their ample reward, and what triumphing upon the good acceptance, vaunted their play was never so dignified, nor ever any players before so beatified :’ but especially if our young Bard afterwards gained admittance into the castle to see a play, which the same evening, after supper, was there ‘ presented of a very good theme, but so set forth by the actors’ well-handling, that pleasure and mirth made it seem very short, though it lasted two good hours and more,’ we may imagine what an impression was made on his infant mind. Indeed the dramatic cast of many parts of that superb entertainment, which continued nineteen days, and was the most splendid of the kind ever attempted in this kingdom, must have had a very great effect on a young imagination, whose dramatic powers were hereafter to astonish the world.”‡

Of the gorgeous splendour and elaborate pageantry which were displayed during this princely fete at Kenelworth, some idea may be formed from the following summary. The Earl met the Queen on Saturday the 9th of July, 1575, at Long Ichington, a town seven miles from Kenelworth, where His Lordship had erected a tent, for the purpose of banqueting Her Majesty, upon such a magnificent scale, “ that justly for dignity,” says Laneham, “ may be comparable with a beautiful palace ; and for greatness and quantity, with a proper town, or rather a citadel ;” and to give his readers an adequate conception of its magnitude, he adds that “ it had seven cart load of pins pertaining to it.”§ At the first entrance of the Queen into His Lordship’s castle a floating island was discerned upon the pool, glittering with torches, on which sat the Lady of the Lake, attended by two nymphs, who addressed Her Majesty in verse, with an historical account of the antiquity and owners of the castle ; and the speech was closed with the sound of cornets, and

* Mr Malone is also of opinion that Shakspeare was present at this magnificent reception of Elizabeth. Vide “*Inquiry*,” p. 150, note 82.

† So denominated from a tract, written by *George Gascoigne*, Esq., entitled “*The Princely Pleasures of Kenelworth Castle.*” It is inserted in *Nichols’s Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i.

‡ *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 143. 4th edition.

§ *Nichols’s Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i. Laneham’s Account of the Queen’s Entertainment at Killingworth Castle, 1575, p. 50, or 78 of the original pamphlet.

other instruments of loud music. Within the base-court was erected a stately bridge, twenty feet wide, and seventy feet long, over which the Queen was to pass; and on each side stood columns, with presents upon them to Her Majesty from the gods. Silvanus offered a cage of wild-fowl, and Pomona various sorts of fruits; Ceres gave corn, and Bacchus wine; Neptune presented sea-fish; Mars the habiliments of war; and Phœbus all kinds of musical instruments. During the rest of her stay, varieties of sports and shows were daily exhibited. In the chase was a savage-man clad in ivy accompanied by satyrs; there were bear-baitings and fire-works, Italian tumblers, and a country brideale, running at the Quintain, and Morrice-dancing. And, that no sort of diversion might be omitted, hither came the Coventry-men and acted the old play already mentioned, called Hock Tuesday, a kind of tilting match, representing, in dumb show, the defeat of the Danes by the English, in the reign of King Ethelred. There were besides on the pool, a Triton riding on a Mermaid eighteen feet long, and Arion upon a Dolphin. To grace the entertainment, the Queen here knighted Sir Thomas Cecil, eldest son to the lord treasurer; Sir Henry Cobham, brother to the Lord Cobham; Sir Francis Stanhope, and Sir Thomas Tresham. An estimate may be formed of the expense from the quantity of ordinary beer that was drank upon this occasion, which amounted to three hundred and twenty hogsheads.*

To the ardent and opening mind of our youthful Bard what exquisite delight must this grand festival have imparted, the splendour of which, as Bishop Hurd remarks, "claims a remembrance even in the annals of our country."† A considerable portion of the very mythology which he had just been studying at school, was here brought before his eyes, of which the costume and language were under the direction of the first poets of the age; and the dramatic cast of the whole pageantry, whether classical or Gothic, was such as probably to impress his glowing imagination with that bias for theatrical amusements, which afterwards proved the basis of his own glory, and of his country's poetic fame.

Here, could he revisit the glimpses of the day, how justly might he deplore, in his own inimitable language, the havoc of time, and the mutability of human grandeur; of this princely castle, once the seat of feudal hospitality, of revelry and song, and of which Laneham, in his quaint style and orthography, has observed,— "Who that considers untoo the stately seat of Kenelworth Castl, the rare beauty of bilding that His Honor hath avaunced; all of the hard quarry-stone: every room so spacious, so well belighted, and so hy roofed within; so seemly too sight, by du proportion without; a day tyme, on every side so glittering by glasse; a night, by continuall brightnesse of candel, fyre, and torch-light, transparent thro the lyghtsome wyndow, as it wear the Egiptian Pharos relucet untoo all the Alexandrian coast: or els (too talke merily with my mery freend) thus radiant, as though Phœbus for hiz eaz wouold rest him in the Castl, and not every night so to travel doown untoo the Antipodes; heertoo so fully furnisht of rich apparell and ustensilez apted in all points to the best;"‡ of this vast pile the very ruins are now so reduced, that the grand gateway, and the banquetting hall, eighty-six feet in length, and forty-five in width, are the only important remains. §

* Life of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1727. 8vo. p. 92.

† Hurd's Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. i. p. 148. Edit. of 1788.

‡ Laneham's Account, p. 65. of the Original.

§ The following extract from Laneham's Letter, which immediately follows the passage given in the text, and in which I have dropped the author's singular orthography, will afford the reader a curious and very entertaining description of the costly and magnificent gardens of Kenelworth Castle, gardens in which it is probable the youthful Shakspeare had more than once wandered with delight:—

"Unto this, His Honour's exquisite appointment of a beautiful garden, an acre or more of quantity, that lieth on the north there: wherein hard all along the castle-wall is reared a pleasant terrace of a ten foot high, and a twelve broad: even under foot, and fresh of fine grass; as is also the side thereof toward the garden, in which, by sundry equal distances, with obelisks, spheres, and white bears, all of stone, upon their curious bases, by goodly shew were set: to these two fine arbours redolent by sweet trees and flowers, at each end one, the garden plot under that, with fair allies green by grass, even voided from the borders a both sides, and some (for change) with sand, not light or too soft or soily by dust, but smooth and firm, pleasant to walk on, as a sea-shore when the water is availd: then, much gracified by due proportion of four even quarters: in the midst of each, upon a base a two foot square, and high, seemly

If Shakspeare were taken as early from school as we have supposed, and his slender attainments in latinity strongly warrant the supposition, it is more than probable, building on the traditional hint in Rowe, of his aid being *wanted at home*,* that he continued to assist his father in the wool-trade for some years; that is, in all likelihood, until his sixteenth or eighteenth year. Mr. Malone, however, not adverting to this tradition, has, in a note to Rowe's Life, declared his belief, "that, on leaving school, Shakspeare was placed in the office of some country attorney, or the seneschal of some manor court:" † a position which we think im-

bordered of itself, a square pilaster rising pyramidally of a fifteen foot high: symmetrically pierced through from a foot beneath, until a two foot of the top: whereupon for a capital, an orb of a ten inches thick: every of these (with his base) from the ground to the top, of one whole piece; hewn out of hard porphery, and with great art and heed (thinks me) thither conveyed and there erected. Where, further also, by great cast and cost, the sweetness of savour on all sides, made so repirant from the redolent plants and fragrant herbs and flowers, in form, colour, and quantity so deliciously variant; and fruit-trees bedecked with apples, pears, and ripe cherries.

"And unto these, in the midst against the terrace, a square cage, sumptuous and beautiful, joined hard to the north wall (that a that side gards the garden as the garden the castle), of a rare form and excellency, was raised: in height a twenty foot, thirty long, and a fourteen broad. From the ground strong and close, reared breast high, whereat a soil of a fair moulding was couched all about: from that upward, four great windows a front, and two at each end, every one a five foot wide, as many more even above them divided on all parts by a transome and architrave, so likewise ranging about the cage. Each window arched in the top, and parted from other in even distance by flat fair bolted columns, all in form and beauty like, that supported a comely cornish couched all along upon the bole square; which with a wire net, finely knit, of meshes six square, an inch wide (as it were for a flat roof) and likewise the space of every window with great cunning and comeliness, even and tight was all over-strained. Under the cornish again, every part beautified with great diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires; pointed, tabled, rok and round; garnished with their gold, by skilful head and hand, and by toil and pencil so lively expressed, as it mought be great marvel and pleasure to consider how near excellency of art could approach unto perfection of nature.

"Holes were there also and caverns in orderly distance and fashion, voided into the wall, as well for heat, for coolness, for roost a nights and refuge in weather, as also for breeding when time is. More, fair even and fresh holly-trees for pearching and proining, set within, toward each and one.

"Hereto, their diversity of meats, their fine several vessels for their water and sundry grains; and a man skilful and diligent to look to them and tend them.

"But (shall I tell you) the silver sounded lute, without the sweet touch of hand; the glorious golden cup, without the fresh fragrant wine; or the rich ring with gem, without the fair featured finger; is nothing indeed in his proper grace and use: even so His Honour accounted of this mansion, till he had placed their tenants according. Had it therefore replenished with lively birds, *English, French, Spanish, Canarian*, and (I am deceived if I saw not some) *African*. Whereby, whether it became more delightful in change of tunes, and harmony to the ear; or else in difference of colours, kinds, and properties to the eye, I'll tell you if I can, when I have better bethought me.

"In the centre (as it were) of this goodly garden, was there placed a very fair fountain, cast into an eight-square, reared a four foot high; from the midst whereof a column up set in shape of two Athlants joined together a back half; the one looking east, tother west, with their hands upholding a fair formed bowl of a three foot over; from whence sundry fine pipes did lively distill continual streams into the receipt of the fountain, maintained still two foot deep by the same fresh falling water: wherein pleasantly playing to and fro, and round about, carp, tench, bream, and for variety, perch, and eel, fish fair-liking all, and large: In the top, the *ragged staff*; which with the bowl, the pillar, and eight sides beneath, were all hewn out of rich and hard white marble. A one side *Neptune* with his trident fusk triumphing in his throne, trailed into the deep by his marine horses. On another, *Thetis* in her chariot drawn by her dolphins. Then *Triton* by his fishes. Here *Proteus* herding his sea-bulls. There *Doris* and her daughters solacing a sea and sands. The waves scourging with froth and foam, intermingled in place, with whales, whirlpools, sturgeons, tunnies, conchs, and wealks, all engraven by exquisite device and skill, so as I may think this not much inferior unto *Phæbus* gates, which (Ovid says) and peradventure a pattern to this, that *Vulcan* himself did cut: whereof such was the excellency of art, that the work in value surmounted the stuff, and yet were the gates all of clean massy silver.

"Here were things, ye see, mought inflame any mind to long after looking; but whoso was found so hot in desire, with the wreast of a cok was sure of a cooler: water spurting upward with such vehemency, as they should by and by be moistened from top to toe; the he's to some laughing, but the she's to more sport. This some time was occupied to very good pastime.

"A garden then so appointed, as wherein aloft upon sweet shawdowed walk of terrace, in heat of summer, to feel the pleasant whisking wind above, or delectable coolness of the fountain spring beneath: to taste of delicious strawberries, cherries and other fruits, even from their stalks: to smell such fragrancly of sweet odours, breathing from the plants, herbs, and flowers: to hear such natural melodious musick and tunes of birds: to have in eye, for mirth, some time these under springing streams; then, the woods, the waters (for both pool and chase were hard at hand in sight), the deer, the people (that out of the east arbour in the base court also at hand in view), the fruits trees, the plants, the herbs, the flowers. the change in colours, the birds flittering, the fountain streaming, the fish swimming, all in such delectable variety, order, dignity; whereby, at one moment, in one place, at hand, without travel, to have so full fruition of so many God's blessings, by entire delight unto all senses (if all can take) at once: for *etymon* of the word worthy to be called *Paradise*: and though not so goodly as *Paradise* for want of the fair rivers, yet better a great deal by the lack of so unhappy a tree." Pages 66—72.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 59.

† *Ibid.* p. 60, note 7.

probable only in point of time; and in justice to Mr. Malone, it must be added, that in other places he has given a much wider latitude to the period of this engagement.

The circumstances on which this conjecture has been founded, are these:—that, in the first place, throughout the dramas of Shakspeare, there is interspersed such a vast variety of legal phrases and allusions, expressed with such technical accuracy, as to force upon the mind a conviction, that the person who had used them must have been intimately acquainted with the profession of the law; and, secondly, that at the close of Aubrey's manuscript anecdotes of Shakspeare, which are said to have been collected, at an early period, from the information of the neighbours of the poet, it is positively asserted, that our bard "understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country."*

On the first of these data, it has been observed by Mr. Malone, in his "Attempt to ascertain the Order in which the Plays of Shakspeare were written," that the poet's "knowledge of legal terms is not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind; it has the appearance of technical skill; and he is so fond of displaying it on all occasions, that I suspect he was early initiated in at least the forms of law, and was employed, while he yet remained at Stratford, in the office of some country-attorney, who was at the same time a petty conveyancer, and perhaps also the seneschal of some manor-court."† In confirmation of this opinion, various instances are given of his legal phraseology, which we have copied in the note below;‡ and here we must remark that the

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 214.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 276.

‡ "—— For what in me was *purchased*,
Falls upon thee in a much fairer sort.'

K. Hen. IV. P. II.

"*Purchase* is here used in its strict legal sense, in contradistinction to an acquisition by *descent*.

'Unless the devil have him in *fee-simple, with fine and recovery*.'

Merry Wives of Windsor.

'He is *'rested on the case*.'

Comedy of Errors.

'—— with *bills* on their necks, Be it known unto all men by these presents,' &c.

As you like it.

'—— who writes himself *armigero*, in any *bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation*.'

Merry Wives of Windsor.

'Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your *single bond*.'

Merchant of Venice.

'Say, for non-payment that the debt should double.'

Venus and Adonis.

"On a conditional bond's becoming forfeited for non-payment of money borrowed, the whole penalty, which is usually the double of the principal sum lent by the obligee, was formerly recoverable at law. To this our poet here alludes.

'But the defendant doth that plea deny ;]
To 'cide his title, is impanell'd
A quest of thoughts.'

Sonnet 46.

"In *Much Ado about Nothing*, Dogberry charges the watch to keep their fellow's counsel and their own. This Shakspeare transferred from the oath of a grand jurymen.

'And let my officers of such a nature
Make an *extent* upon his house and lands.'

As you like it.

'He was taken *with the manner*.'

Love's Labour's lost.

'*Enfeof'd* himself to popularity.'

K. Hen. IV. P. I.

'He will seal the *fee-simple* of his salvation, and cut the entail from all remainders, and a perpetual succession for it perpetually.'

All's Well that ends Well.

'Why, let her *accept before excepted*.'

Twelfth Night.

'—— which is four terms or two actions;—and he shall laugh without *intervallums*.'

K. Hen. IV. P. II.

'—— keeps leets and *law-days*.'

K. Richard II.

'*Pray in aid* for kindness.'

Anthony and Cleopatra.

"No writer but one who had been conversant with the technical language of leases and other conveyances, would have used *determination* as synonymous to *end*. Shakspeare frequently uses the word in that sense. See vol. xii. (Reed's Shakspeare), p. 202, n. 2.; vol. xiii. p. 127, n. 4.; and (Mr Malone's edit.) vol. x. p. 202, n. 8. 'From and after the *determination* of such a term,' is the regular language of conveyancers.

'Humbly complaining to Your Highness.'

K. Richard III.

expression, while he yet remained at Stratford, leaves the period of his first application to the law, from the time at which he left school to the era of his visiting London, unfixed; a portion of time which we may fairly estimate as including the lapse of *ten* years.

With regard to the affirmation of Aubrey, that Shakspeare had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country, the same ingenious critic very justly remarks, that "many traditional anecdotes, though not perfectly accurate, contain an adumbration of the truth;" and then adds,

"I am strongly inclined to think that the assertion contains, though not the truth, yet something like it: I mean that Shakspeare had been employed for some time in his younger years as a *teacher* in the country; though Dr. Farmer as incontestably proved, that he could not have been a teacher of Latin. I have already suggested my opinion, that before his coming to London he had acquired some share of legal knowledge in the office of a petty country-conveyancer, or in that of the steward of some manorial court. If he began to apply to this study at the age of eighteen, two years afterwards he might have been sufficiently conversant with conveyances to have taught others the form of such legal assurances as are usually prepared by country-attorneys; and perhaps spent two or three years in this employment before he removed from Stratford to London. Some uncertain rumour of this kind might have continued to the middle of the last century, and by the time it reached Mr. Aubrey, our poet's original occupation was changed from a scrivener to that of a schoolmaster." *

In this quotation it will be immediately perceived that the period of our author's application to the study of the law, is now supposed to have occurred at the age of eighteen, when he must have been long removed from school, and that he is also conceived to have been a teacher of what he had acquired in the profession.

These conjectures of Mr. Malone, which, in their latter and modified state, appear to me singularly happy, have met with a warm advocate in Mr. Whiter:

"The anecdotes," he remarks, "which have been delivered down to us respecting our poet, appear to me neither improbable nor, when duly examined, inconsistent with each other: even those which seem least allied to probability, contain in my opinion the *adumbrata*, if not *expressa signa veritatis*. Mr. Malone has admirably sifted the accounts of Aubrey; and there is no truth, that is obtained by a train of reasoning not reducible to demonstration, of which I am more convinced than the conjecture of Mr. Malone, who supposes that Shakspeare, before he quitted Stratford, was employed in such matters of business as belonged to the office of a country-attorney, or the steward of a manor-court. I have stated this conjecture in general terms, that the fact, as it relates to our poet's legal allusions, might be separated from any accidental circumstances of historical truth. I am astonished, however, that Mr. Malone has confirmed his conjecture by so few examples. I can supply him with a very large accession." †

* Humbly complaining to Your Lordship, your orator,' etc. are the first words of every bill in chancery.

* A kiss in fee farm! In witness whereof these parties interchangeably have set their hands and seals.
Troilus and Cressida.

* Art thou a *feodary* for this act?
Cymbeline.

"See the note on that passage, vol. xviii. p. 508. n. 3. Reed's edit.

* Are those *precepts* served?' says Shallow to Davy, in *K. Henry IV.*

"*Precept* in this sense is a word only known in the office of a justice of peace.

* Tell me what state, what dignity, what honour,
Can'st thou *demise* to any child of mine?
K. Richard III.

"—— hath *demised*, granted, and to farm let,' is the constant language of leases. What poet but Shakspeare has used the word *demised* in this sense?

"Perhaps it may be said, that our author in the same manner may be proved to have been equally conversant with the terms of divinity or physic. Whenever as large a number of instances of his ecclesiastical or medicinal knowledge shall be produced, what has now been stated will certainly not be entitled to any weight." Malone, Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 276, n. 9.

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 222, 223.

† Whiter's Specimen of a Commentary, p. 95, note. As Mr Whiter has not chosen to append these additional examples, I have thought it would be satisfactory to give the few which more immediately occur to my memory.

"Immediately provided in that case."
Midsummer Night's Dream.
"Royally attornied."
Winter's Tale.

Mr. Chalmers, however, refuses his aid in the structure of this conjectural fabric, and asserts that Shakspeare might have derived all his technical knowledge of the law from a very few books. From "Totell's Presidents," 1572; from "Pulton's Statutes," 1578; and from the "Lawier's Logike," 1578.*

That these books were read by Shakspeare, there can, we think, be little doubt; but this concession by no means militates against the idea of his having been employed for a short period in some profitable branch of the law. After weighing all the evidence which can now be adduced, either for or against the hypothesis, we shall probably make the nearest approximation to the truth in concluding, that the object of our research, having assisted his father for some years in the wool-trade, for which express purpose he had been early taken from school, might deem it necessary, on the prospect of approaching marriage, to acquire some additional means of supporting a domestic establishment, and, accordingly, annexed to his former occupation, or superseded it by a knowledge of an useful branch of the law, which, by being taught to others, might prove to himself a source of revenue. Thus combining the record of Rowe with the tradition of Aubrey, and with the evidence derived from our author's own works, an inference has been drawn which, though not amounting to certainty, approaches the confine of it with no small pretensions.

Of the events and circumstances which must have occurred to Shakspeare in the interval between his leaving the free-school of Stratford, and his marriage, scarcely any thing has transpired; the following anecdote, however, which is still preserved at Stratford and the neighbouring village of Bidford, may be ascribed with greater propriety to this than to any subsequent period of his life. We shall give it in the words of the author of the "Picturesque Views on the Avon," who professes to have received it on the spot, as one of the traditional treasures of the place. Speaking of Bidford, which is still equally notorious for the excellence of its ale, and the thirsty clay of its inhabitants, he adds, "there were anciently two societies of village-yeomanry in this place, who frequently met under the appellation of Bidford Topers. It was a custom with these heroes to challenge any of their neighbours, famed for the love of good ale, to a drunken combat: among others the people of Stratford were called out to a trial of strength, and in the number of their champions, as the traditional story runs, our Shakspeare, who forswore all thin potations, and addicted himself to ale as lustily as Falstaff to his sack, is said to have entered the lists. In confirmation of this tradition we find an epigram written by Sir Aston Cockayn, and published in his poems in 1658, p. 124: it runs thus—

" TO MR CLEMENT FISHER, OF WINCOT.

" SHAKSPEARE, your *Wincot* ale hath much renown'd,
That fox'd a beggar so (by chance was found
Sleeping) that there needed not many a word
To make him to believe he was a lord :

" That doth *utter* all men's ware-a."

Winter's Tale.

" Thy title is *affeer'd*." (This is a law-term for confirmed.)

" Keep leets, and law-days, and in sessions sit."

Othello.

" Why should calamity be full of words ?"
Windy *attorneys* to their *client* woes.

Richard III.

" But when the heart's *attorney* once is mute,
The *client* breaks, as desperate in his suit."

Venus and Adonis.

" So now I have confessed that he is thine,
And I myself am *mortgaged to thy will*."

Sonnet 134.

" He learn'd but, *surety-like*, to write for me,
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
The *statute* of thy beauty, etc."

Sonnet.

* Chalmers's Apology, p. 554. The "Lawiers Logike" was written by Abraham Fraunce.

But you affirm (and in it seems most eager)
 'Twill make a lord as drunk as any beggar.
 Bid *Norton* brew such ale as Shakspeare fancies
 Did put Kit Sly into such lordly trances :
 And let us meet there (for a fit of gladness)
 And drink ourselves merry in sober sadness.

“ When the Stratford lads went over to Bidford, they found the toppers were gone to Evesham fair; but were told, if they wished to try their strength with the sippers, they were ready for the contest. This being acceded to, our bard and his companions were staggered at the first outset, when they thought it adviseable to sound a retreat, while the means of retreat were practicable; and then had scarce marched half a mile, before they were all forced to lay down more than their arms, and encamp in a very disorderly and unmilitary form, under no better covering than a large crab-tree; and there they rested till morning.

“ This tree is yet standing by the side of the road. If, as it has been observed by the late Mr. T. Warton, the meanest hovel to which Shakspeare has an allusion interests curiosity, and acquires an importance, surely the tree that has spread its shade over him and sheltered him from the dews of the night, has a claim to our attention.

“ In the morning, when the company awakened our bard, the story says they intreated him to return to Bidford, and renew the charge; but this he declined, and looking round upon the adjoining villages, exclaimed, ‘ No! I have had enough; I have drank with

‘ Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston,
 Haunted Hillbro,’ Hungry Grafton,
 Dudging Exhall, Papist Wicksford,
 Beggary Broom, and Drunken Bidford.’

“ Of the truth of this story I have very little doubt: it is certain that the crab-tree is known all round the country by the name of Shakspeare’s crab; and that the villages to which the allusion is made, all bear the epithets here given them: the people of Pebworth are still famed for their skill on the pipe and tabor: Hillborough is now called Haunted Hillborough; and Grafton is notorious for the poverty of its soil.”*

To the immediate neighbourhood indeed of Stratford, and to the adjacent country, with which, at this early period of his life, our poet seems to have been familiarised by frequent excursions either of pleasure or business, are to be found some allusions in his dramatic works. In the *Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly being treated with great ceremony and state, on waking in the bed-chamber of the nobleman, exclaims—“ What, would you make me mad? Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly’s son of Burton-heath; by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not: if she say I am not fourteen pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lyingest knave in Christendom. What, I am not bestraught!” †

There are two villages in Warwickshire called Burton Dorset and Burton Hastings; but that which was the residence of old Sly, is, in all probability, Burton on the Heath, on the south side of the Avon, opposite to Bidford, and about eighteen miles from Stratford. The first scene of the play is described as “ Before an Alehouse on a Heath,” and it is remarkable that on Burton-heath there still remains a tenement, which was formerly a public-house, under the name of Woncott or Onecot: yet there is much reason to conclude, from the mode in which Wincot is spoken of, both in this place and in the following passage, that Burton-heath and Wincot were considerably distant: in the *Second Part of King Henry IV.* Davy says to Justice Shallow, “ I beseech you, Sir, to countenance William Visor of *Wincot* against Clemont Perkes of the hill,” ‡ a phraseology which seems to imply, not an insulated house, but a village, an inference which is strongly supported by the fact that near Stratford there is actually a village with the closely resembling name of Wilnecotte, which in the pronunciation and orthography of the common people would almost necessarily become Wincot. It should

* Ireland’s Picturesque Views, p. 229—233.

† Act v. sc. 1.

‡ Act i. sc. 2.

likewise be mentioned that Mr Warton is of opinion that this is the place to which Shakspeare alludes, and he adds, "the house kept by our genial hostess still remains, but is at present a mill." *

We are indebted also to the Second Part of King Henry IV. for another local allusion of a similar kind: Silence, addressing Pistol, nicknames him "goodman Puff of Barson," † a village which, under this appellation, and that of Barston, is situated between Coventry and Solyhall. It may indeed excite some surprise that we have not more allusions of this nature to commemorate; that the scenery which occurred to him early in life, and especially at this period, when the imagery drawn from nature must have been impressed on his mind in a manner peculiarly vivid and defined, when he was free from care, unshackled by a family, and at liberty to roam where fancy led him, has not been delineated in some portion of his works, with such accuracy as immediately to designate its origin. For, if we consider the excursive powers of his imagination, and the desultory and unsettled habits which tradition has ascribed to him during his youthful residence at Stratford, we may assert, without fear of contradiction, and as an undoubted truth, that his rambles into the country, and for a poet's purpose, were both frequent and extensive, and that not a stream, a wood, or hamlet, within many miles of his native town, was unvisited by him at various times and under various circumstances.

Yet, if we can seldom point out in his works any distinct reference to the actual scenery of Stratford and its neighbourhood, we may observe, that few of the remarkable events of his own time appear to have escaped his notice; and among these may be found one which occurred at this juvenile period of his life, and to which we have an allusion in *Romeo and Juliet*; for though the personages of the drama exist and act in a foreign clime, yet in this, and in many similar instances, he hesitates not to describe the events of his native country as occurring wherever he has chosen to lay the scene. Thus the nurse, describing to Lady Capulet the age at which Juliet was weaned, says

" 'Tis since the *earthquake* now eleven years,"—

a line, which, as Mr. Tyrhwitt and Mr. Malone have observed, ‡ manifestly alludes to a phenomenon of this kind that had been felt throughout England in the year 1580, and of which Holinshed, the favourite historian of our bard, has given the following striking account:

"On the sixt of April (1580), being Wednesdaie in Easter weeke, about six of the clocke toward evening, a sudden earthquake happening in London, and almost generalie throughout all England, caused such an amazednesse among the people as was wonderfull for the time, and caused them to make their earnest praiers so Almighty God! The great clocke bell in the palace at Westminster strake of it selfe against the hammer with the shaking of the earth, as diverse other clocks and bells in the steeples of the cities of London and elsewhere did the like. The gentlemen of the Temple being then at supper, ran from the tables, and out of their hall with their knives in their hands. The people assembled at the plaie-houses in the fields, as at the Whoreater (the Theater I would saie) were so amazed, that doubting the ruine of the galleries, they made hast to be gone. A péece of the Temple church fell downe, some stones fell from Saint Paule's church in London: and at Christs church neere to Newgate-market, in the sermon while, a stone fell from the top of the same church, which stone killed out of hand one Thomas Greie an apprentice, and another stone fell on his fellow-servant named Mabell Eueret, and so brused hir that she lived but four daies after. Diverse other at that time in that place were sore hurt, with running out of the church one over an other for feare. The tops of diverse chimnies in the citie fell downe, the houses were so shaken: a part of the castell at Bishops Stratford in Essex fell downe. This earthquake indured in or about London not passing one minute of an houre, and was no more felt. But afterward in Kent, and on the sea cosat it was felt three

* Mr. Edwards and Mr Steevens have conjectured that *Barton* and *Woodmancot*, vulgarly pronounced *Woncot*, in Gloucestershire, might be the places meant by Shakspeare; and Mr Tollet remarks, that *Woncot* may be put for *Wolphmancote*, vulgarly *Ovencote*, in Warwickshire. Vide Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 30, and vol. xii. p. 240.

† Act v. sc. 3.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol xx. p. 38, n. 2.

times ; and at Sandwich at six of the clocke the land not onelie quaked, but the sea also fomed, so that the ships tottered. At Dover also the same houre was the like, so that a péece of the cliffe fell into the sea, with also a péece of the castell wall there: a piece of Saltwood castell in Kent fell downe: and in the church of Hide the bels were heard to sound. A péece of Sutton church in Kent fell downe, the earthquake being there not onlie felt, but also heard. And in all these places and others in east Kent, the same earthquake was felt three times to move, to wit, at six, at nine, and at eleven of the clocke.” *

In this passage, to which we shall again have occasion to revert, the violence and universality of the event described, are such as would almost necessarily form an era for reference in the poet's mind; and the date, indeed, of the *prima stamina* of the play in which the line above-mentioned is found, may be nearly ascertained by this allusion.

If, as some of his commentators have supposed, Shakspeare possessed any grammatical knowledge of the French and Italian languages, it is highly probable that the acquisition must have been obtained in the interval which took place between his quitting the grammar-school of Stratford and his marriage, a period, if our arrangement be admitted, of about six years; and consequently, any consideration of the subject will almost necessarily claim a place at the close of this chapter.

That the dramas of our great poet exhibit numerous instances in which both these languages are introduced, and especially the former, of which we have an entire scene in Henry V., will not be denied by any reader of his works; nor will any person, acquainted with the literature of his times, venture to affirm, that he might not have acquired by his own industry, and through the medium of the introductory books then in circulation, a sufficient knowledge of French and Italian for all the purposes which he had in view. We cannot therefore agree with Dr. Farmer, when he asserts, that Shakspeare's acquaintance with these languages consisted only of a familiar phrase or two picked up in the writers of the time, or the course of his conversation. †

The corrupted state of the French and Italian passages, as found in the early editions of our poet's plays, can be no argument that he was totally ignorant of these languages; as it would apply with nearly equal force to prove that he was similarly situated with regard to his vernacular tongue, which in almost every scene of these very editions has undergone various and gross corruptions. Nor will greater conviction result, when it is affirmed that this foreign phraseology might be the interpolation of the players; for it remains to be ascertained, that they possessed a larger portion of 'exotic literature than Shakspeare himself.

The author of an essay on Shakspeare's learning in the *Censura Literaria*, from which we have already quoted a passage in favour of his having made some progress in latinity, is likewise of opinion that his knowledge of the French was greater than Dr. Farmer is willing to allow.

“ I have been confirmed in this opinion,” he observes, “ by a casual discovery of Shakspeare having imitated a whole French line and description in a long French epic poem, written by Garnier, called the “ *Henriade*,” like Voltaire's, and on the same subject, first published in 1594.

“ In *As You Like It*, Shakspeare gives an affecting description of the different manners of men in the different ages of life, which closes with these lines :

‘ What ends this strange eventful history
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.’

“ Now—why have recourse for an insipid preposition to a language of which he is said to have been totally ignorant? I always supposed therefore that there must have been some peculiar

* Holinshed's Chronicles, vol. iv. p. 426. edit. of 1808.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 85. Mr. Capel Lofft's opinion of the Italian literature of Shakspeare is somewhat more extended than my own. “ My impression,” says he, “ is, that Shakspeare was not unacquainted with the most popular authors in *Italian prose*: and that his ear had listened to the enchanting tones of *Petrarca* and some others of their great poets.” Preface to his *Laura*, p. xcii.

circumstance well known in those times, which must have induced him to give this motley garb to his language :—but what that circumstance was I could not discover until I accidentally, in a foreign literary journal, met with a review of a republication of that poem of Garnier at Paris, in which were inserted, as a specimen of the poem, a description of the appearance of the ghost of Admiral Coligny on the night after his murder at the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and in the following lines :

*'Sans pieds, sans mains, sans nez, sans oreilles, sans yeux,
Meurtri de toutes parts; la barbe et les cheveux
Poudreux, ensanglantez, chose presque incroyable !
Tant cette vision étoit triste et horrible !'*

“ Here it immediately appeared to what author Shakspeare had gone for the archetype of his own description of the last stage of old age, which, by a parody on the above lines, he meant to represent like to that mutilated ghost; and this seems to indicate that he had read that poem in the original; for we even find the *meurtri de toutes parts* imitated by *sans every thing*. A friend of mine formerly mentioned this to Mr. Steevens, and he has briefly noticed this parody, if I recollect rightly, in his joint edition along with Johnson,* but he did not copy the original lines of Garnier; nor so far as I know any editor since; which however are too remarkable to be altogether consigned to oblivion; and it is not very likely, that any Englishman will ever read through that long dull poem; neither should I myself have known of those lines, if they had not been quoted as a specimen. Steevens's note is so very brief as to be quite obscure in regard to what consequence he thought deducible from the imitation: he seems to suggest as if there might have been some English translation of the poem published, though now unknown; this is the constant refuge for Shakspeare's knowledge of any thing written originally in another language. But even if the fact were true, yet no translator would have preserved the repetition of that word *sans*; for this he must have gone to the French poem itself, therefore must at least have been able to read that line in French, if not also the whole description of the ghost; and if that, why not able also to read other French books? It may, indeed, be *supposed*, that some friend may have shown him the above description, and explained to him the meaning of the French lines, but this is only to make a second supposition in order to support a former one made without sufficient foundation: we may just as well make a single supposition at once, that he was himself able to read and understand it, since he has evidently derived from it his own description of the decrepitude of old age. Upon the whole, if his copy of a single word from Holinshed, viz. ‘on *this* side Tiber,’ is a proof of his having read that historian, why also is not his copy of the repetition of *sans*, and his parody of Coligny's ghost, an equally good proof of his having read the poem of Garnier in the original French language? To reason otherwise is to say, that when he gives us bad French, this proves him not to understand it; and that when he gives us good French, applied with propriety and even with ingenuity, yet this again equally proves that he neither understood what he wrote, nor was so much as able to read the French lines, which he has thus so wittily imitated.” †

Dr. Farmer has himself granted that Shakspeare *began* to learn Latin: why then not allow, from premises still more copious and convincing, that he began likewise to learn French and Italian? That he wanted not inclination for the attempt, the frequent use of these languages in his works will sufficiently evince; that he had some leisure at the period which we have appropriated to these acquisitions, namely, between the years 1576 and 1582, few will be disposed to deny; and that he had books which might enable him to make some progress in these studies, the following list will ascertain :—

1. A Treatyse English and French right necessary and profitable for all young Children. 1560.
2. Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar, &c. Newly corrected and imprinted by Wykes: 1560, reprinted 1567.
3. The Italian Grammar and Dictionary: By W. Thomas. 1561.
4. Lentulo's Italian Grammar, put into English: By Henry Grenthem. 1578.
5. Ploiche, Peter, Introduction to the French Tongue: 1578.
6. An Alvearie, or Quadruple Dictionarie, containing foure sundrie tongues: namelie, English, Latine, Greeke, and French: By I. Baret. 1580. ‡

* This notice does not appear in the Variorum edition of 1803.

† Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 287, et seq.

‡ Vide Chalmers's Apology, p. 549, and Bibliotheca Reediana, p. 9.

In short, with regard to the literature of Shakspeare, the nearest approximation to the truth will be found to arise from taking a medium course between the conclusions of Dr. Farmer, and of those who have gone into a contrary extreme. That he had made some and that the usual progress in the Latin language during the short period of his school-education, it is, we think, in vain to deny; but that he ever attained the power of reading a Roman classic with facility, cannot with any probability be affirmed: it will be likewise, we are disposed to believe, equally rational and correct, if we conclude, from the evidence which his genius and his works afford, that his acquaintance with the French and Italian languages was not merely confined to the picking up a familiar phrase or two from the conversation or writings of others, but that he had actually commenced, and at an early period too, the study of these languages, though, from his situation, and the circumstances of his life, he had neither the means nor the opportunity of cultivating them to any considerable extent. *

* Since these observations were written, a work has fallen into my hands under the title of "A Tour in Quest of Genealogy, through several parts of Wales, Somersetshire, and Wiltshire, in a Series of Letters to a Friend in Dublin; interspersed with a description of Stourhead and Stonehenge; together with various Anecdotes and curious Fragments from a Manuscript Collection ascribed to Shakspeare. By a Barrister." London, 1811.

These manuscripts ascribed to Shakspeare, which, from the language and sentiment of almost every line, are manifestly a mere fiction, are said to have been purchased at an auction at Carmaerthen, consisting of verses and letters that passed between Shakspeare and his mistress Anne Hatheway, together with letters to and from him and others, a journal of Shakspeare, an account of many of his plays, memoirs of his life by himself, &c. I have mentioned the publication in this place, as it is worthy of remark, that the fabricator of these MSS., whoever he is, appears to have entertained an idea similar to my own, with regard to the period when our poet attempted the acquisition of the modern languages; for of the supposed memoirs said to be written by Shakspeare himself, the following, among others, is given as a specimen:—

"Having an earnest desier to lerne forraine tonges, it was mie good happ to have in mie fathere's howse an Italian, one Girolama Albergi, tho he went bye the name of Francesco Manzini, a dier of woole; but he was not what he wished to passe for; he had the breeding of a gentilman, and was a righte sounde scholer. It was he taught me the littel Italian I know, and rubbed up my Latten; we redd Bandello's Novells together, from the which I gatherid some dellicious flowres to stick in mie dramattick poseys. He was newew to Battisto Tibaldi, who made a translacion of the Greek poete, Homar, into Italian; he showed me a copy of it given him by his kinsman, Ercole Tibaldi." P. 202.

I must do the author of this literary forgery, however, the justice to say, that in taste and genius he is immeasurably beyond his youthful predecessor, and that some of the verses ascribed to *Anna Hatheway*, as he terms her, possess no inconsiderable beauties. It is most extraordinary, however, that any individual should venture to bring forward the following lines, which are exquisitely modern in their structure, as the production of a cottage girl of the sixteenth century.

" TO THE BELOVYD OF THE MUSES AND MEE.

" SWEETESwanne of Avon, thou whoose art
Can mould at will the human hart,
Can drawe from all who reade or heare,
The unresisted smile and teare :

By thee a vyllege maiden found,
No care had I for measured sounde ;
To dresse the fleese that Willie wrought
Was all I knewe, was all I sought.

At thie softe lure too quicke I flewe,
Enamored of thie songe I grew ;
The distaffe soone was layd aside,
And all mie woork thie straynes supply'd.

Thou gavest at first th' inchanting quill,
And everie kiss convay'd thie skill ;
Unfelt, ye maides, ye cannot tell
The wondrous force of suche a spell.

Nor marvell if thie breath transfuse
A charme replete with everie muse ;
They cluster rounde thie lippes, and thyne
Distill their sweetes improv'd on myne.

ANNA HATHEWAY."

CHAPTER IV.

Shakspeare married to Anne Hathaway—Account of the Hathaways—Cottage at Shottery—Birth of his eldest Child, Susanna—Hamnet and Judith baptized—Anecdote of Shakspeare—Shakspeare apparently settled in the Country.

SHAKSPEARE married and became the father of a family at a very early period; at a period, indeed, when most young men, even in his own days, had only completed their school-education. He had probably been attached also to the object of his affections, who resided very near to him, for a year or two previous to the nuptial connection, which took place in 1582; and Mr. Malone is inclined to believe that the ceremony was performed either at Hampton-Lacy, or at Billesley, in the August of that year,* when consequently the poet had not attained the age of eighteen and a half!

The maiden name of the lady who had induced her lover to enter thus early on the world, with little more than his passion to console, and his genius to support them, was Anne Hathaway, the daughter of Richard Hathaway, a substantial yeoman, residing at Shottery, a village about a mile distant from Stratford. It appears also from the tomb-stone of his mistress† in the church of Stratford, that she must have been born in 1556, and was therefore eight years older than himself.

Of the family of the Hathaways, little now, except the record of a few deaths and baptisms, can be ascertained with precision: in the register-books of the parish of Stratford, the following entry, in all probability, refers to the father of the poet's wife:—"Johanna, daughter of Richard Hathaway, otherwise Gardiner, of Shottery, was baptized May 9, 1596."‡

As the register does not commence before 1558, the baptism of Anne could not of course be included; but it appears that the family of this Richard was pretty numerous, for Thomas his son was baptized at Stratford, April 12, 1569; John, another son, Feb. 3. 1574; and William, another son, Nov. 39, 1578.§ Thomas died at Stratford in 1654-5, at the advanced age of eighty-five.** That the Hathaways have continued resident at Shottery and the neighbourhood, down to the present age, will be evident from the note below, which records their deaths to the year 1785, as inscribed on the floor, in the nave and aisle of Stratford church.††

The cottage at Shottery, in which Anne and her parents dwelt, is said to be yet standing, and is still pointed out to strangers as a subject of curiosity. It is now impossible to substantiate the truth of the tradition; but Mr. Ireland, who has given a sketch of this cottage in his Picturesque Views on the Avon, observes,

"It is still occupied by the descendants of her family, who are poor and numerous. To this same humble cottage I was referred when pursuing the same inquiry, by the late Mr. Harte, of

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 139, note 4.

† Heere Lyeth Interred The Bodye of Anne, Wife of Mr. William Shakspeare, Who Depted. This Life The 6th Day of Avgvst, 1623, Being of The Age of 67 Yeares."—Wheler's Stratford, p. 76.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 133.

§ *Ibid.* p. 134. Note by Malone.

** *Ibid.* p. 128.

†† "Richard Hathaway, of Shottery, died 15th April, 1692. Robert Hathaway died 4th March, 1728, aged 64. Edmund Hathaway died 14th June, 1729, aged 57. Jane his wife died 12th Dec. 1729, aged 64. John Hathaway died 11th Oct. 1731, aged 39. Abigail, wife of John Hathaway, jun. of Luddington, died 5th of May, 1735, aged 29. Mary her daughter died 13th July, 1735, aged 10 weeks. Robert Hathaway, son of Robert and Sarah Hathaway, died the 1st of March, 1723, aged 21. Ursula, wife of John Hathaway, died the 23d of Janry, 1731, aged 50. John Hathaway, sen. died the 5th of Sept. 1753, aged 73. John Hathaway, of Haddington, died the 23d of June, 1775, aged 67. S. H. 1756. S. H. 1785."—Wheler's History and Antiquities of Stratford-upon-Avon, p. 55.

Stratford, before-mentioned. He told me there was an old oak chair, that had always in his remembrance been called Shakspeare's courting chair, with a purse that had been likewise his, and handed down from him to his grand-daughter Lady Bernard, and from her through the Hathaway family to those of the present day. From the best information I was able to collect at the time, I was induced to consider this account as authentic, and from a wish to obtain the smallest trifle appertaining to our Shakspeare, I became a purchaser of these relics. Of the chair I have here given a sketch: it is of a date sufficiently ancient to justify the credibility of its history; and as to farther proof, it must rest on the traditional opinion and the character of this poor family. The purse is about four inches square, and is curiously wrought with small black and white bugles and beads; the tassels are of the same materials. The bed and other furniture in the room where the chair stood, have the appearance of so high antiquity, as to leave no doubt but that they might all have been the furniture of this house long before the time of Shakspeare.

"The proprietor of this furniture, an old woman upwards of seventy, had slept in the bed from her childhood, and was always told it had been there since the house was built. Her absolute refusal to part with this bed at any price was one of the circumstances which led to a persuasion that I had not listened with too easy credulity to the tale she told me respecting the articles I had purchased. By the same person I was informed, that at the time of the Jubilee, the late George Garrick obtained from her a small inkstand, and a pair of fringed gloves, said to have been worn by Shakspeare."

Of the personal charms of the poet's mistress nothing has been transmitted to us by which we can form the smallest estimate, nor can we positively ascertain whether convenience, or the attraction of a beautiful form, was the chief promoter of this early connection. Mr. Rowe merely observes, that, "in order to settle in the world after a family-manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very † young;" language which seems to imply that prudence was the prime motive with the youthful bard. Theobald proceeds still further, and declares "it is probable, a view of interest might partly sway his conduct in this point: for he married the daughter of a substantial yeoman in his neighbourhood, and she had the start of him in age no less than eight years." ‡ Capell, on the contrary, thinks that the marriage was contracted against the wishes of his father, whose displeasure was the consequence of their union. §

A moment's consideration of the character of Shakspeare will induce us to conclude that interest could not be his leading object in forming the matrimonial tie. In no stage of his subsequent life does a motive of this kind appear strongly to have influenced him; and it is well known, from facts which we shall have occasion shortly to record, that his juvenility at Stratford was marked rather by carelessness and dissipation, than by the cool calculations of pecuniary wisdom. In short, to adopt, with slight variation, a line of his own, we may confidently assert that at this period,

"Love and Liberty crept in the mind and marrow of his youth."

Timon of Athens.

Neither can we agree with Mr. Capell in supposing that the father of our bard was averse to the connection; a supposition which he has built on the idea of old Mr. Shakspeare being "a man of no little substance," and that by this marriage of his son he was disappointed in a design which he had formed of sending him to a University! ** Now it has been proved that John Shakspeare was, at this period, if not in distressed yet in embarrassed circumstances, and that neither the school-education of his son, nor his subsequent employment at home, could be such as was calculated in any degree to prepare him for an academical life.

We conclude, therefore, and certainly with every probability on our side, that the young poet's attachment to Anne Hathaway was not only perfectly disinterested, but had met likewise with the approbation of his parents. This will appear

* Ireland's Views, p. 206—209.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 193.

** Ibid. vol. i. p. 193.

‡ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 60.

§ Ibid. vol. i. p. 355, note 1.

with more verisimilitude if we consider, in the first place, that though his bride were eight years older than himself, still she could be but in her twenty-sixth year, an age compatible with youth, and with the most alluring beauty; secondly, it does not appear that the finances of young Shakspeare were in the least improved by the connection; and thirdly, we know that he remained some years at Stratford after his marriage, which it is not likely that he would have done, had he been at variance with his father.

It is to be regretted, and it is indeed somewhat extraordinary, that not a fragment of the bard's poetry, addressed to his Warwickshire beauty, has been rescued from oblivion; for that the muse of Shakspeare did not lie dormant on an occasion so propitious to her inspiration we must believe, both from the custom of the times, and from his own amatory disposition. He has himself told us that

“ Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs.”—

Love's Labour's Lost. Act iv. sc. 3.

and we have seen that an opportunity for qualification was very early placed within his power. That he availed himself of it, there can be no doubt; and had his effusions, on this occasion, descended to posterity, we should, in all probability, have been made acquainted with several interesting particulars relative to his early life and character, and to the person and disposition of his mistress.*

Our ignorance on this subject, however, would have been compensated, had any authentic documents been preserved relative to his establishment at Stratford, in consequence of his marriage; but of his business, or professional employment, no information, or tradition to be depended upon, has reached us. We can only infer, from the evidence produced in the preceding chapter, and from the necessity, which must now have occurred, of providing for a family-establishment, that if, as we have reason to conclude, he had entered on the exercise of a branch of the manorial law, previous to his marriage, and with a view towards that event, he would, of course, be compelled, from prudential motives, to continue that occupation, after he had become a householder, and most probably to combine with it the business of a woolstapler, either on his own separate interest, or in concert with his father.

If any further incitement were wanting to his industry, it was soon imparted; for, to the claims upon him as a husband, were added, during the following year, those which attach to the name of a parent; his eldest child, Susanna, being born in May, 1538, and baptized on the 26th of the same month. Thus, scarcely had our poet completed his nineteenth year, when the most serious duties of life were imperiously forced upon his attention, under circumstances perhaps of narrow fortune not altogether calculated to render their performance easy and pleasant; a situation which, on a superficial view, would not appear adapted to afford that leisure, that free and unencumbered state of intellect, so necessary to mental exertion; but with Shakspeare the pressure of these and of pecuniary difficulties served only to awaken that energy and elasticity of mind, which, ultimately directing his talents into their proper channel, called forth the brightest and most successful emanations of a genius nearly universal.

The family of the youthful bard gathered round him with rapidity; for, in 1584-5, it was increased by the birth of twins, a son and daughter, named Hamnet and Judith, who were baptized on February the 2d, of the same year.

The boy was christened by the name of Hamnet in compliment to his godfather Mr. Hamnet Sadler, and the girl was called Judith, from a similar deference to his wife, Mrs. Judith Sadler, who acted as her sponsor. Mr. Hamnet or

* Building on the high credibility of Shakspeare having employed his poetical talents, at this period, on the subject nearest to his heart, two ingenious gentlemen have been so obliging as not only to furnish him with words on this occasion, but to offer these to the world as the genuine product of his genius. It is scarcely necessary to add, that I allude to the Shakspeare Papers of young Ireland; and to a Tour in Quest of Genealogy, by a Barrister.

Hamlet Sadler, for they were considered as synonymous names, and therefore used indiscriminately,* appears to have been some relation of the Shakspeare family; he is one of the witnesses to Shakspeare's will, and is remembered in it in the following manner:—"Item, I give and bequeath to Hamlet Sadler twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring." Mr. Sadler died at Stratford in October, 1624, and is supposed to have been born about the year 1550. His wife was buried there March 23, 1613-14, and Mr. Malone conjectures that our poet was probably godfather to their son William, who was baptized at Stratford, February 5, 1597-8.† In the Stratford Register are to be found entries of the baptism of six of Mr. Sadler's children, four sons and two daughters, William being the last but one.

An anecdote of Shakspeare, unappropriated to any particular period of his life, and which may with as much, if not more, probability, be ascribed to this stage of his biography, as to any subsequent era, has been preserved as a tradition at Stratford. A drunken blacksmith, with a carbuncled face, reeling up to Shakspeare, as he was leaning over a mercer's door, exclaimed, with much vociferation,

"Now, Mr SHAKSPEARE, tell me, if you can,
The difference between a youth and a young man?"

a question which immediately drew from our poet the following reply:

"Thou son of fire, with *thy face like a maple*,
'The same difference as between a scalded and a coddled apple."

A part of the wit of this anecdote, which, says Mr. Malone, "was related near fifty years ago to a gentleman at Stratford, by a person then above eighty years of age, whose father might have been contemporary with Shakspeare," turns upon the comparison between the blacksmith's face and a species of maple, the bark of which, according to Evelyn, is uncommonly rough, and the grain undulated and crisped into a variety of curls.

It would appear, indeed, from a book published in 1611, under the title of "Tarleton's Jeasts," that this fancied resemblance was a frequent source of sarcastic wit; for it is there recorded of this once celebrated comedian, that, "as he was performing some part 'at the Bull in Bishopsgate-street, where the Queen's players oftentimes played,' while he was 'kneeling down to ask his father's blessing,' a fellow in the gallery threw an apple at him, which hit him on the cheek. He immediately took up the apple, and, advancing to the audience, addressed them in these lines:

'Gentlemen, this fellow, with *his face of mapple*,
Instead of a pippin hath throwne me an apple;
But as for an apple he hath cast a crab,
So instead of an honest woman God hath sent him a drab.'

'The people,' says the relator, 'laughed heartily; for the fellow had a quean to his wife.'"‡

Shakspeare was now, to all appearance, settled in the country; he was carrying on his own and his father's business; he was married and had a family around him; a situation in which the comforts of domestic privacy might be predicted within his reach, but which augured little of that splendid destiny, that universal fame and unparalleled celebrity, which awaited his future career.

In adherence, therefore, to the plan which we have announced, of connecting the circumstances of the times with our author's life, we have chosen this period of it, as admirably adapted for the introduction of a survey of country life and

* Thus in the will of Shakspeare we read, "I give and bequeath to *Hamlet* Sadler;" when at the close, Mr Sadler as a witness writes his christian name *Hamnet*. See Malone's note on this subject, Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 135.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 158, note 1.

‡ Malone's Historical Account of the English Stage, Shakspeare's Works p. lxxv.

manners, its customs, diversions, and superstitions, as they existed in the age of Shakspeare. These, therefore, will be the subject of the immediately following chapters, in which it shall be our particular aim, among the numerous authorities to which we shall be obliged to have recourse, to draw from the poet himself those passages which throw light upon the topics as they rise to view; an arrangement which, when it shall have been carried, in all its various branches, through the work, will clearly show, that from Shakspeare, more than from any other poet, is to be collected the history of the times in which he lived, so far as that history relates to popular usage and amusement.

CHAPTER V.

A View of Country-Life during the Age of Shakspeare—Its Manners and Customs—Rural Characters.

It may be necessary, in the commencement of this chapter, to remark, that rural life, in the strict acceptation of the term, will be at present the exclusive object of attention; a survey of the manners and customs of the metropolis, and of the superior orders of society, being deferred to a subsequent portion of the work.

No higher character will, therefore, be introduced in this sketch than the Country Squire, constituting according to Harrison, who wrote about the year 1580, one of the second order of gentlemen; for these, he remarks, “be divided into two sorts, as the baronie or estate of lords (which conteineth barons and all above that degree), and also those that be no lords, as knights, esquires, and simple gentlemen.”* He has also furnished us, in another place, with a more precise definition of the character under consideration. “Esquire (which we call commonlie squire) is a French word, and so much in Latine as Scutiger vel Armige, and such are all those which beare armes, or armoires, testimonies of their race from whence they be descended. They were at the first costerels or bearers of the armes of barons, or knights, and thereby being instructed in martiall knowledge, had that name for a dignitie given to distinguish them from common souldiers called Gregarii Milities when they were together in the field.”†

It is curious to mark the minute distinctions of gentlemen as detailed at this period, in the various books of Armorie or Heraldrie. The science, indeed, was cultivated, in the days of Shakspeare, with an enthusiasm which has never since been equalled, and the treatises on the subject were consequently multitudinous.

“—If no gentleman, why then no arms,”‡

exclaims our poet; the aspirants, therefore, to this distinction were numerous, and in the “Gentleman’s Academie; or, The Booke of St. Albans,” published by Gervase Markham in 1595, which he says in the dedication was then absolutely “necessarie and behovefull to the accomplishment of the gentlemen of this flourishing ile—in the heroicall and excellent study of Armory,” we find “nine sortes” and “foure maner” of gentlemen expressly distinguished.

“Of nine sortes of gentlemen:

“First, there is a gentleman of ancestry and blood.

“A gentleman of blood.

“A gentleman of coat-armour, and those are three, one of the kings badge, another of lordship, and the third of killing a pagan.

* Holinshed’s Chronicles, edit. of 1807, in six vol. 4to, vol. i. p. 276.

† Holinshed, vol. i. p. 273,

‡ Taming of the Shrew, act ii. sc. 1.

"A gentleman untrall : a gentleman Ipocrafet : a gentleman spirituall and temporall : there is also a gentleman spirituall and temporall.—

"The divers maner of gentlemen :

"There are foure maner of gentlemen, to wit, one of auncestrie, which must needes bee of blood, and three of coate-armour, and not of blood : as one a gentleman of coate-armour of the kings badge, which is of armes given him by an herauld : another is, to whome the king giveth a lordeshippe, to a yeoman by his letters pattents, and to his heires for ever, whereby hee may beare the coate-armour of the same lordeshippe : the thirde is, if a yeoman kill a gentleman, Pagan or Sarazen, whereby he may of right weare his coate-armour : and some holde opinion, that if one christian doe kill an other, and if it be lawfull battell, they may weare each coate-armour, yet it is not so good as where the christian killes the Pagan."

We have also the virtues and vices proper or contrary to the character of the gentleman, the former of which are divided into five amorous and four sovereign : "the five amorous are these,—lordly of countenance, speech, wise in answere, perfitte in government and cherefull to faithfulness : the foure soveraigne are these fewe,—oathes are no swearing, patient in affliction, knowledge of his owne birth, and to feare to offend his soveraigne."* The vices which are likewise enumerated as nine, are all modifications of cowardice, lechery, and drunkenness.

* Of the very rare tract from which these extracts are taken, the following is the entire title-page :—
"The Gentleman's Academie ; or, the Booke of St. Albans : containing three most exact and excellent Bookes : the first of Hawking, the second of all the proper Termes of Hunting, and the last of Armorie : all compiled by Juliana Barnes, in the Yere from the Incarnation of Christ 1486. And now reduced into a better method, by G. M. London. Printed for Humphrey Lownes, and are to be sold at his shop in Paules Church-yard, 1595." This curious edition of the "Booke of St. Albans," accommodated to the days of Shakspeare, contains 95 leaves 4to. and I shall add the interesting dedication :

"To the Gentlemen of England :
and all good fellowship
of Huntsmen and
Falconers.

"Gentlemen, this booke, intreating of Hawking, Hunting, and Armorie ; the originall copie of the which was doone at St. Albans, about what time the excellent arte of printing was first brought out of Germany, and practised here in England : which booke, because of the antiquitie of the same, and the things therein contained, being so necessarie and behovefull to the accomplishment of the gentlemen of this flourishing ile, and others which take delight in either of these noble sports, or in that heroicall and excellent study of Armory, I have revived and brought again to light the same which was almost altogether forgotten, and either few or none of the perfect copies thereof remaining, except in their hands, who wel knowing the excellency of the worke, and the rarenesse of the booke, smothered the same from the world, thereby to enrich themselves in private with the knowledge of these delights. Therefore I humbly crave pardon of the precise and judicial reader, if sometimes I use the the words of the ancient authour, in such plaine and homely English, as that time afforded, not being so regardful, nor tying myself so strictly to deliver any thing in the proper and peculiar wordes and termes of arte, which for the love I beare to antiquitie, and to the honest simplicitie of those former times, I observe as wel beseeming the subject, and no whit disgracefull to the worke, our tong being not of such puritie then, as at this day the poets of our age have raised it to : of whom, and in whose behalf I wil say thus much, that our nation may only thinke herself beholding for the glory and exact compendiousnes of our language. Thus submitting our academy to your kind censures and friendly acceptance of the same, and requesting you to reade with indifferency, and correct with judgement ; I commit you to God. G. M."

From this dedication we learn that the original edition of the Booke of St. Albans was as scarce towards the close of the sixteenth century as at the present day ; that "few or none of the perfect copies" were to be obtained ; for that those were in the hands of Bibliomaniacs who (like too many now existing) "smother'd them from the world." We have, therefore, every reason to conclude, from "the rarenesse (and consequent value) of the booke" of 1486, that the copy of Juliana's work in the library of Shakspeare, was the edition by Markham of 1595. I shall just add, that the copy now before me, was purchased at the Roxburgh sale, for 9*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* ! It is, notwithstanding, probable, from the *peculiarities* attending Markham's re-impression, that this sum, great as it may appear, will be exceeded at some future sale.

The attachment of Gervase Markham to the subjects which employed the pen of his favourite Prioress, is very happily introduced by Mr. Dibdin, while alluding to the similar propensities of the modern Markham, Mr. Haslewood. "Up starts *Florizel*, and blows his bugle, at the annunciation of any work, new or old, upon the diversions of Hawking, Hunting, or Fishing ! Carry him through *Camillo's* cabinet of Dutch pictures, and you will see how instinctively, as it were, his eyes are fixed upon a sporting piece by Wouvermans. The hooded hawk, in his estimation, hath more charms than Guido's Madonna :—how he envies every rider upon his white horse !—how he burns to bestride the foremost steed, and to mingle in the fair throng, who turn their blue eyes to the scarcely bluer expanse of heaven ! Here he recognises Gervase Markham, spurring his courser ; and there he fancies himself lifting Dame Juliana from her horse ! Happy deception ! dear fiction ! says *Florizel*—while he throws his eyes in an opposite direction, and views every printed book upon the subject, from Barnes to Thornton." *Bibliomania*, p. 729, 730.

The following very amusing description of "the difference twixt Churles and Gentlemen," will prove an

That the character of the gentleman was estimated, in the reign of Elizabeth, according to this definition of the Prioress of Sopewell, we have consequently the authority of Markham to assert, who tells us, that the study of his modernised edition of St. Albans was still "behovefull to the accomplishment of the gentleman" of 1595.

The mansion-houses of the country-gentlemen were, in the days of Shakspeare, rapidly improving, both in their external appearance and in their interior comforts. During the reign of Henry the Eighth, and even of Mary, they were, if we except their size, little better than cottages, being thatched buildings, covered on the outside with the coarsest clay, and lighted only by lattices; when Harrison wrote, in the age of Elizabeth, though the greater number of manor-houses still remained framed of timber, yet he observes, "such as be latelie builded, are commonlie either of bricke or hard stone, or both; their roomes large and comelie, and houses of office further distant from their lodgings." * The old timber mansions, too, were now covered with the finest plaster, which, says the historian, "beside the delectable whitenesse of the stuffe itselfe, is laied on so even and smoothlie, as nothing in my judgement can be donewith more exactnesse:" † and at the same time, the windows, interior decorations, and furniture were becoming greatly more useful and elegant.

"Of old time our cuntries houses," continues Harrison, "instead of glasse did use much lattise, and that made either of wicker or fine rifts of oke in chekerwise. I read also that some of the better sort, in and before the time of the Saxons, did make panels of horne instead of glasse, and fix them in wooden calmes. But as horne in windows is now quite laid downe in everie place, so our lattises are also growne into lesse use, because glasse is come to be so plentifull, and within a verie little so good cheape if not better than the other.—The wals of our houses on the inner sides in like sort be either hanged with tapisterie, arras worke, or painted cloths, wherein either diverse histories, or hearbes, beasts, knots, and such like are stained, or else they are seeled with oke of our owne, wainescot brought hither out of the east countries, whereby the roomes are not a little commanded, made warme, and much more close than otherwise they would be. As for stooves we have not hitherto used them greatlie, yet doo they now begin to be made in diverse houses of the gentrie.—Likewise in the houses of knights, gentlemen, &c. it is not geson to behold generallie their great provision of Turkie worke, pewter, brasse, fine linen, and

adequate specimen of Markham's edition, will be appropriate to the subject in the text, and may be compared with the accurate reprint of the edition of W. De Worde by Mr. Haslewood.

"There was never gentleman, nor churle ordained, but hee had father and mother: Adam and Eve had neither father nor mother, and therefore in the sonnes of Adam and Eve, first issued out both gentleman and churle. By the sonnes of Adam and Eve, to wit, Seth, Abell, and Caine, was the royall blood divided from the rude and barbarous, a brother to murder his brother contrary to the law, what could be more ungentlemanly or vile? in that, therefore, became Caine and al his offspring churles, both by the curse of God, and his owne father. Seth was made a gentleman through his father and mother's blessing, from whose loynes issued Noah, a gentleman by kind and linage. Noah had three sonnes truely begotten, two by the mother, named Cham and Sem, and the third by the father called Japhet, even in these three, after the world's inundation, was both gentlenes and vilenes discerned, in Cham was grose barbarisme founde towards his owne father in discovering his privities, and diriding from whence hee proceeded. Japhet the youngest gentlemanlike reproved his brother, which was to him reputed a vertue, where Cham for his abortive vilenes became a churle both through the curse of God and his father Noah. When Noah awoke, hee said to Cham his sonne knowest not thou how it is become of Caine the sonne of Adam, and of his churlelike blood, that for them all the worlde is drowned save eight persons, and wilt thou nowe begin barbarisme againe, whereby the world in after ages shall be brought to consummation? well upon thee it shall bee and so I pray the Great one it maye fall out, for to thee I give my curse, and withall the north part of the world, to draw thine habitation unto, for there shall it be where sorrow, care, colde, and as a mischievous and unrespected churle thou shalt live, which part of the earth shall be termed Europe, which is the country of churles. Japhet come hither my sonne, on thee will I raine my blessing, deare insteede of Seth: Adams sonne, I make thee a gentleman, and thy renowne shall stretch through the west part of the world, and to the end of the occident, where wealth and grace shall flourish, there shall be thine habitation, and thy dominion shall bee called Asia, which is the cuntrie of gentlemen. And Sem my sonne, I make thee a gentleman also, to multiply the blood of Abell slaine so undeservedlie, to thee I give the orient, that part of the world which shall be called Africa, which is the country of temperateres: and thus divided Noah the world and his blessings. From the of-spring of gentlemanly Japhet came Abraham, Moyses, Aaron and the Prophets, and also the king of the right line of Mary, of whom that only absolute gentleman Jesus was borne, perfite God and perfite man, according to his manhood king of the lande of Juda and the Jewes, and gentleman by his mother Mary princesse of coat armor." Fol. 44.

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 316.

† *Ibid.* p. 315.

thereto costlie cupbords of plate, worth five or six hundred or a thousand pounds, to be deemed by estimation." *

The house of every country-gentleman of property included a neat chapel and a spacious hall; and where the estate and establishment were considerable, the mansion was divided into two parts or sides, one for the state or banqueting-rooms, and the other for the household; but in general, the latter, except in baronial residences, was the only part to be met with, and when complete had the addition of parlours; thus Bacon, in his *Essay on Building*, describing the household side of a mansion, says,

"I wish it divided at the first into a hall, and a chappell, with a partition betweene; both of good state and bignesse: and those not to goe all the length, but to have, at the further end, a winter, and a summer parler, both faire: and under these roomes a faire and large cellar, sunke under ground: and likewise, some privie kitchens, with butteries and pantries, and the like."† It was the custom also to have windows opening from the parlours and passages into the chapel, hall, and kitchen, with the view of overlooking or controlling what might be going on; a trait of vigilant caution, which may still be discovered in some of our ancient colleges and manor-houses, and to which Shakspeare alludes in *King Henry the Eighth*, where he describes His Majesty and Butts the physician entering at a window above, which overlooks the council-chamber.‡ We may add, in illustration of this system of architectural espionage, that Andrew Borde, when giving instructions for building a house in his "*Dictarie of Health*," directs "many of the chambers to have a view into the chapel:" and that Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a letter, dated 1573, says, "if it please Her Majestie, she may come in through my gallerie, and see the disposition of the hall in dynner-time, at a window opening thereunto."§

The hall of the country-squire was the usual scene of eating and hospitality, at the upper end of which was placed the orsille or high table, a little elevated above the floor, and here the master of the mansion presided, with an authority, if not a state, which almost equalled that of the potent baron. The table was divided into upper and lower messes, by a huge saltcellar, and the rank and consequence of the visitors were marked by the situation of their seats above, and below, the saltcellar; a custom which not only distinguished the relative dignity of the guests, but extended likewise to the nature of the provision, the wine frequently circulating only above the saltcellar, and the dishes below it being of a coarser kind than those near the head of the table. So prevalent was this uncourteous distinction, that Shakspeare, in his *Winter's Tale*, written about the year 1604, or 1610, designates the inferior orders of society by the term "lower messes."

—————"Lower messes,
Perchance, are to this business purblind." **

Delkar, likewise, in his play called "*The Honest Whore*," 1604, mentions in strong terms the degradation of sitting beneath the salt: "Plague him, set him beneath the salt; and let him not touch a bit, till every one has had his full cut."†† Hall too, in the sixth satire of his second book, published in 1597, when depicting the humiliated state of the squire's chaplain, says, that he must not

"ever presume to sit *above the salt*:"

and Jonson, in his *Cynthia's Revels*, speaking of a coxcomb, says, "his fashion is, not to take knowledge of him that is beneath him in clothes. He never drinks *below the salt*." See act i. sc. 2.

This invidious regulation appears to have extended far into the seventeenth century; for Massinger in his "*City Madam*," acted in 1632, thus notices it:

—————"My proud lady
Admits him to her table, marry, ever

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 315. 317.

† Act v. sc. 2.

** Reed's Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 236.

† Bacon's *Essayes or Counsels*, 4to. edit., 1632, p. 260.

§ Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xv. p. 184. note 5. by Steevens

†† Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 531.

Beneath the salt, and there he sits the subject
Of her contempt and scorn :” *

and Cartright still later :

————— “Where you are best esteem’d,
You only pass under the favourable name
Of humble cousins that sit *beneath the salt*.” *Love’s Convert*.

The luxury of eating and of good cooking were well understood in the days of Elizabeth, and the table of the country-squire frequently groaned beneath the burden of its dishes; at Christmas and at Easter especially, the hall became the scene of great festivity.

“In gentlemen’s houses, at Christmas,” says Aubrey, “the first dish that was brought to table was a boar’s head, with a lemon in his mouth. At Queen’s Coll. Oxon. they still retain this custom, the bearer of it bringing it into the hall, singing to an old tune an old Latin rhyme, “*Apri caput defero*,” &c. The first dish that was brought up to table on Easter-day was a red-herring riding away on horseback; *i. e.* a herring ordered by the cook something after the likeness of a man on horseback, set in a corn sallad. The custom of eating a gammon of bacon at Easter (which is still kept up in many parts of England) was founded on this, *viz.* to shew their abhorrence of Judaism at that solemn commemoration of our Lord’s resurrection.” †

Games and diversions of various kinds, such as mumming, masking, dancing, etc. etc. were allowed in the hall on these days; and the servants, or heralds, wore the coats of arms of their masters, and cried “*Largesse*” thrice. The hall was usually hung round with the insignia of the squire’s amusements, such as hunting, shooting, fishing, etc.; but in case he were a justice of the peace, it assumed a more terrific aspect. The halls of the justice of peace,” observes honest Aubrey, “were dreadful to behold. The skreen was garnished with corslets and helmets, gaping with open mouths, with coats of mail, launces, pikes, halberts, brown bills, bucklers.” ‡

The following admirable description of an old English hall, which still remains as it existed in the days of Elizabeth, is taken from the notes to Mr. Scott’s recent poem of *Rokeby*, and was communicated to the bard by a friend; the story which it introduces, I have also added, as it likewise occurred in the same reign, and affords a curious though not a pleasing trait of the manners of the times; as, while it gives a dreadful instance of ferocity, it shows with what ease justice, even in the case of the most enormous crimes, might be set aside.

Littlecote-House stands in a low and lonely situation. On three sides it is surrounded by a park that spreads over the adjoining hill; on the fourth, by meadows which are watered by the river Kennet. Close on one side of the house is a thick grove of lofty trees, along the verge of which runs one of the principal avenues to it through the park. It is an irregular building of great antiquity, and was probably erected about the time of the termination of feudal warfare, when defence came no longer to be an object in a country-mansion. Many circumstances in the interior of the house, however, seem appropriate to feudal times. The hall is very spacious, floored with stones, and lighted by large transom windows, that are clothed with casement. Its walls are hung with old military accoutrements, that have long been left a prey to rust. At one end of the hall is a range of coats of mail and helmets, and there is on every side abundance of old-fashioned pistols and guns, many of them with matchlocks. Immediately below the cornice hangs a row of leathern jerkins, made in the form of a shirt, supposed to have been worn as armour by the vassals. A large oak-table, reaching nearly from one end of the room to the other, might have feasted the whole neighbourhood, and an appendage to one end of it made it answer at other times for the old game of shuffle-board. The rest of the furniture is in a suitable style, parti-

* Massinger’s Plays, *apud* Gifford, vol. iv. p. 7.

† From a MS. of Aubrey’s in the Ashmole Museum, as quoted by Mr Malcolm in his *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London*, part i. p. 220. 4to.

‡ Aubrey’s MS. Malcolm, p. 221, 222.

cularly an arm-chair of cumbrous workmanship, constructed of wood, curiously turned, with a high back and triangular seat, said to have been used by Judge Popham in the reign of Elizabeth. The entrance into the hall is at one end by a low door, communicating with a passage that leads from the outer door, in the front of the house to a quadrangle within; at the other it opens upon a gloomy staircase, by which you ascend to the first floor, and, passing the doors of some bed-chambers, enter a narrow gallery, which extends along the back front of the house from one end to the other of it, and looks upon an old garden. This gallery is hung with portraits, chiefly in the Spanish dresses of the sixteenth century. In one of the bed-chambers, which you pass in going towards the gallery, is a bedstead with blue furniture, which time has now made dingy and threadbare, and in the bottom of one of the bed-curtains you are shewn a place where a small piece has been cut out and sown in again; a circumstance which serves to identify the scene of the following story :

“ It was a dark rainy night in the month of November, that an old midwife sate musing by her cottage fire-side, when on a sudden she was startled by a loud knocking at the door. On opening it she found a horseman, who told her that her assistance was required immediately by a person of rank, and that she should be handsomely rewarded, but that there were reasons for keeping the affair a strict secret, and, therefore, she must submit to be blindfolded, and to be conducted in that condition to the bed-chamber of the lady. After proceeding in silence for many miles through rough and dirty lanes, they stopped, and the midwife was led into a house, which, from the length of her walk through the apartment, as well as the sounds about her, she discovered to be the seat of wealth and power. When the bandage was removed from her eyes, she found herself in a bedchamber, in which was the lady on whose account she had been sent for, and a man of a haughty and ferocious aspect. The lady was delivered of a fine boy. Immediately the man commanded the midwife to give him the child, and, catching it from her, he hurried across the room, and threw it on the back of the fire, that was blazing in the chimney. The child, however, was strong, and by its struggles rolled itself off upon the hearth, when the ruffian again seized it with fury, and, in spite of the intercession of the midwife, and the more piteous entreaties of the mother, thrust it under the grate, and raking the live coals upon it, soon put an end to its life. The midwife, after spending some time in affording all the relief in her power to the wretched mother, was told that she must be gone. Her former conductor appeared, who again bound her eyes, and conveyed her behind him to her own home ; he then paid her handsomely, and departed. The midwife was strongly agitated by the horrors of the preceding night ; and she immediately made a deposition of the fact before a magistrate. Two circumstances afforded hopes of detecting the house in which the crime had been committed ; one was, that the midwife, as she sate by the bed-side, had, with a view to discover the place, cut out a piece of the bed-curtain, and sown it in again ; the other was, that as she had descended the staircase, she had counted the steps. Some suspicions fell upon one Darrell, at that time the proprietor of Littlecote-House and the domain around it. The house was examined, and identified by the midwife, and Darrell was tried at Salisbury for the murder. By corrupting his judge, he escaped the sentence of the law ; but broke his neck by a fall from his horse in hunting, in a few months after. The place where this happened is still known by the name of Darrell’s Hill : a spot to be dreaded by the peasant whom the shades of evening have overtaken on his way.

“ Littlecote-House is two miles from Hungerford, in Berkshire, through which the Bath road passes. The fact occurred in the reign of Elizabeth. All the important circumstances I have given exactly as they are told in the country.” *Rokeby*, 4to. edit. notes, p. 102—106.

The usual fare of country-gentlemen, relates Harrison, was “ foure, five, or six dishes, when they have but small resort ;” and accordingly, we find that Justice Shallow, when he invites Falstaff to dinner, issues the following orders : “ Some pigeons, Davy ; a couple of shortlegged hens ; a joint of mutton ; and any pretty little tiny kickshaws, tell William Cook.” * But on feast-days, and particularly on the festivals above-mentioned, the profusion and cost of the table were astonishing. Harrison observes that the country-gentlemen and merchants contemned butchers’ meat on such occasions, and vied with the nobility in the

* Henry IV. part ii. act v. sc. 1.

production of rare and delicate viands, of which he gives a long list;* and Massinger says,

“Men may talk of country-christmasses —
 Their thirty-pound butter'd eggs, their pies of carps' tongues,
 Their pheasants drench'd with ambergris, the carcasses
 Of three fat wethers bruised for gravy, to
 Make sauce for a single peacock; yet their feasts
 Were fasts, compared with the city's.”†

It was the custom in the houses of the country-gentlemen to retire after dinner, which generally took place about eleven in the morning, to the garden-bower or an arbour in the orchard, in order to partake of the banquet or dessert; thus Shallow, addressing Falstaff after dinner, exclaims, “Nay, you shall see mine orchard: where, in an arbour, we will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of carraways, and so forth.”‡ From the banquet it was usual to retire to evening prayer, and thence to supper, between five and six o'clock; for in Shakspeare's time, there were seldom more than two meals, dinner and supper:

“Heretofore,” remarks Harrison, “there hath beene much more time spent in eating and drinking than commonlie is in these daies, for whereas of old we had breakfasts in the forenoone, beverages, or nuntions after dinner, and thereto reare suppers generallie when it was time to go to rest. Now these od repasts, thanked be God, are verie well left, and ech one in manner (except here and there some yoong hungrie stomach that cannot fast till dinner time) contenteth himselfe with dinner and supper onelie. The nobilitie, gentlemen, and merchantmen, especiallie at great meetings, doo sit commonlie till two or three of the cloke at afternoone, so that with manie is an hard matter to rise from the table to go to evening praier, and returne from thence to come time enough to supper.”§

The supper which, on days of festivity, was often protracted to a late hour, and often too as substantial as the dinner, was succeeded, especially at Christmas, by gambols of various sorts, and sometimes the squire and his family would mingle in the amusements, or retiring to the tapestried parlour, would leave the hall to the more boisterous mirth of their household; then would the Blind Harper, who sold his fit of mirth for a groat, be introduced, either to provoke the dance, or to rouse their wonder by his minstrelsy; his “matter being for the most part stories of old time, as the tale of Sir Topas, the reportes of Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, Adam Bell, and Clymme of the Clough, and such other old romances or historical rimes, made purposely for recreation of the common people at Christmasse dinners and brideales.”** Nor was the evening passed by the parlour fire-side dissimilar in its pleasures; the harp of history or romance was frequently made vocal by one of the party. “We ourselves,” says Puttenham, who wrote in 1589, “have written for pleasure a little brief romance, or histo-

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 281. The particulars of the diet of our ancestors in the age of Shakspeare will be given in a subsequent part of the work.

† City Madam, act ii. sc. 1.

Gervase Markham in his *English House-Wife*, the first edition of which was published not long after Shakspeare's death, after mentioning in his second chapter, which treats of cookery, the manner of “ordering great feasts,” closes his observations under this head, with directions for “a more humble feast, or an ordinary proportion which any good man may keep in his family, for the entertainment of his true and worthy friend;” this humble feast or ordinary proportion, he proceeds to say, should consist for the first course of “sixteen full dishes, that is, dishes of meat that are of substance, and not empty, or for shew—as thus, for example; first, a shield of brawn with mustard; secondly, a boyl'd capon; thirdly, a boyl'd piece of beef; fourthly, a chine of beef roasted; fifthly, a neat's tongue roasted; sixthly, a pig roasted; seventhly, chevets bak'd; eighthly, a goose roasted; ninthly, a swan roasted; tenthly, a turkey roasted; the eleventh, a haunch of venison roasted; the twelfth, a pasty of venison; the thirteenth, a kid with a pudding in the belly; the fourteenth, an olive-pye; the fifteenth, a couple of capons; the sixteenth, a custard or dowsets. Now to these full dishes may be added sallets, fricases, quelque-choses, and devised paste, as many dishes more which make the full service no less than two and thirty dishes, which is as much as can conveniently stand on one table, and in one mess; and after this manner you may proportion both your second and third course, holding fulness on one half of the dishes, and shew in the other, which will be both frugal in the spendor, contentment to the guest, and much pleasure and delight to the beholders.” P. 100, 101. ninth edition of 1683, small 4to.

‡ Henry IV. part ii. act. v. sc. 3.

§ Holinshed, vol. i. p. 287.

** Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, p. 69, reprint of 1811.

rical ditty, in the English tong of the Isle of Great Britaine, in short and long meetres, and by breaches or divisions to be more commodiously sung to the harpe in places of assembly, where the company shal be desirous to heare of old adventures, and valiaunces, of noble knights in times past, as are those of King Authur and his Knights of the Round Table, Sir Bevys of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, and others like."*

The *posset* at bed-time closed the joyous day, a custom to which Shakspeare has occasionally alluded; thus Lady Macbeth says of the "surfeited grooms," "I have drugg'd their possets;" † Mrs. Quickly tells Rugby, "Go; and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire;" ‡ and Page, cheering Falstaff, exclaims, "Thou shalt eat a posset to-night at my house." Thomas Heywood also, a contemporary of Shakspeare, has particularly noticed this refection as occurring just before bed-time: "Thou shalt be welcome to beef and bacon, and perhaps a bag-pudding; and my daughter Nell shall pop a posset upon thee when thou goest to bed."**

In short, hospitality, a love of festivity, and an ardent attachment to the sports of the field, were prominent traits in the character of the country-gentleman in Shakspeare's days. The floor of his hall was commonly occupied by his greyhounds, and on his hand was usually to be found his favorite hawk. His conversation was very generally on the subject of his diversions; for as Master Stephen says, "Why you know, an' a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages now-a-dayes, I'll not give a rush for him. They are more studied than the *Greeke*, or the *Latine*." †† Classical acquirements were, nevertheless, becoming daily more fashionable and familiar with the character which we are describing; but still an intimacy with heraldry, romance, and the chroniclers constituted the chief literary wealth of the country-gentleman. In his dress he was plain, though occasionally costly; yet Harrison complains in 1580, that the gaudy trappings of the French were creeping even into the rural and mercantile world:

"Neither was it merrier," says he, "with England, than when an Englishman was knowne abroad by his owne cloth, and contented himselfe at home with his fine carsie hosen, and a meane slop: his coat, gowne, and cloack of browne, blue, or puke, with some pretie furniture of velvet of furre, and a doublet of sad tawnie, or blacke velvet, or other comelie silke, without such cuts and gawrish colours as are worne in these daies, and never brought in but by the consent of the French, who thinke themselves the gaigest men, when they have most diversities of jagges and change of colours about them." ‡‡

Of the female part of the family of the country-gentleman, we must be indulged in giving one description from Drayton, which not only particularizes the employments and dress of the younger part of the sex, but is written with the most exquisite simplicity and beauty; he is delineating the well-educated daughter of a country-knight:

"He had, as antique stories tell,
A daughter cleaped Dawsabel,
A maiden fair and free:
And for she was her father's heir,
Full well she was ycond the leir
Of mickle courtesy.

The silk well couth she twist and twine,
And make the fine march-pine,
And with the needle work:
And she couth help the priest to say
His mattins on a holy day,
And sing a psalm in kirk.

* Puttenham's Art of English Poesie, p. 33, reprint of 1811.

† Merry Wives of Windsor, act i. sc. 4.

** Heywood's Edward II. p. 1.

†† Jonson's Every Man in his Humour, act i. sc. 1. Acted in the year 1598.

‡‡ Holinshed, vol. i. p. 290.

† Macbeth. act ii. sc. 2.

§ Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

She wore a frock of frolic green,
Might well become a maiden queen,
Which seemly was to see;
A hood to that so neat and fine,
In colour like the columbine,
Ywrought full featously.

Her features all as fresh above,
As is the grass that grows by Dove,
And lythe as lass of Kent.
Her skin as soft as Leinster wool,
As white as snow on Peakish Hull,
Or swan that swims in Trent.

This maiden in a morn betime,
Went forth when May was in the prime,
To get sweet setywall,
The honey-suckle, the harlock,
The lily, and the lady-smock,
To deck her summer-hall."*

Some heightening to the picture of the country-gentleman which we have just given, may be drawn from the character of the upstart squire or country-knight, as it has been pourtrayed by Bishop Earle, towards the commencement of the seventeenth century; for the absurd imitation of the one is but an overcharged or caricature exhibition of the costume of the other.

"The upstart country-gentleman," remarks the Bishop, "is a holiday clown, and differs only in the stuff of his clothes, not the stuff of himself, for he bare the kings sword before he had arms to weild it; yet being once laid o'er the shoulder with a knighthood, he finds the herald his friend. His father was a man of good stock, though but a tanner or usurer; he purchased the land, and his son the title. He has doffed off the name of a country-fellow, but the look not so easy, and his face still bears a relish of churne-milk. He is guarded with more gold lace than all the gentlemen of the country, yet his body makes his clothes still out of fashion. His house-keeping is seen much in the distinct families of dogs, and serving-men attendant on their kennels, and the deepness of their throats is the depth of his discourse. A hawk he esteems the true burden of nobility, and is exceeding ambitious to seem delighted in the sport, and have his fist gloved with his jesses†. A justice of peace he is to domineer in his parish, and do his neighbour wrong with more right. He will be drunk with his hunters for company, and stain his gentility with droppings of ale. He is fearful of being sheriff of the shire by instinct, and dreads the assize-week as much as the prisoners. In sum, he's but a clod of his own earth, or his land is the dunghill and he the cock that crows over it: and commonly his race is quickly run, and his children's children, though they scape hanging, return to the place from whence they came."‡

Notwithstanding the hospitality which generally prevailed among the country-gentlemen towards the close of the sixteenth century, the injurious custom of deserting their hereditary halls for the luxury and dissipation of the metropolis, began to appear; and, accordingly, Bishop Hall has described in a most finished and picturesque manner the deserted mansion of his days;

"Beat the broad gates, a goodly hollow sound
With double echoes doth againe rebound;
But not a dog doth bark to welcome thee,
Nor churlish porter canst thou chafing see:
All dumb and silent, like the dead of night,
Or dwelling of some sleepy Sybarite!
The marble pavement hid with desert weed,
With house-leek, thistle, dock, and hemlock-seed.—
Look to the towered chimnies, which should be
The wind-pipes of good hospitalitie:—
Lo, there th'unthankful swallow takes her rest,
And fills the tunnel with her circled nest."§

* Chalmers's Poets, vol. iv. p. 435, 436. Drayton, Fourth Eclogue.

† "A term in hawking, signifying the short straps of leather which are fastened to the hawk's legs, by which he is held on the fist, or joined to the leash." Bliss.

‡ Earle's Microcosmography; or a Piece of the World discovered, in Essays and Characters. Edition of 1811, by Philip Bliss.

§ Hall's Satires, book v. sat. 2. printed in 1598.

That it was no very uncommon thing for country-gentlemen to spend their Christmas in London at this period, is evident from a letter preserved by Mr. Lodge, in his *Illustrations of British History*; it is written by William Fleetwood, afterwards Queen's Serjeant, to the Earl of Derby; is dated New Yere's Daye, 1589, and contains the following passage:—"The gentlemen of Norff. and Suffolk were commanded to dep^rte from London before Xtemmas, and to repaire to their countries, and there to kepe hospitalitie amongst their neighbours." * The fashion, however, of annually visiting the capital did not become general, nor did the character of the country-squire, such as it was in the days of Shakspeare, alter materially during the following century. †

* Lodge's *Illustrations of British History, Biography, and Manners, in the Reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, and James I.*, vol. ii. p. 383.

That this evil kept gradually increasing during the reign of James I., may be proved from the testimony of Peacham and Brathwait; the former, in his "*Compleat Gentleman*," observes,—“Much doe I detest that effeminacy of the most, that burne out day and night in their beds, and by the fire side; in trifles, gaming, or courting their yellow mistresses all the winter in a city; appearing but as cuckoos in the spring, one time in the yeare to the countrey and their tenants, leaving the care of keeping good houses at Christmas, to the honest yeomen of the countrey;” (p. 214.) and the latter, in his "*English Gentleman*," addressing the rural fashionables of his day, exclaims,—“Let your countrey (I say) enjoy you, who bred you, shewing there your hospitality, where God hath placed you, and with sufficient meanes blessed you. I doe not approve of these, who fly from their countrey, as if they were ashamed of her, or had committed something unworthy of her. How blame-worthy then are these *Court-comets*, whose onely delight is to admire themselves? These, no sooner have their bed-rid fathers betaken themselves to their last home, and removed from their crazie couch, but they are ready to sell a mannor for a coach. They will not take it as their fathers tooke it: their countrey houses must bee barred up, lest the poore passenger should expect what is impossible to finde, releefe to his want, or a supply to his necessity. No, the cage is opened, and all the birds are fled, not one crum of comfort remaining to succour a distressed poore one. Hospitality, which was once a relique of gentry, and a knowne cognizance to all ancient houses, hath lost her title, merely through discontinuance: and *great houses*, which were at first founded to releve the poore, and such needful passengers as travelled by them, are now of no use but onely as waymarkes to direct them. But whither are these *Great ones* gone? To the Court; there to spend in boundlesse and immoderate riot, what their provident ancesters had so long preserved, and at whose doores so many needy soules have beene comfortably releevd.” Second edition, 1633, p. 332.

In the margin of the page from which this extract is taken, occurs the following note:—"This is excellently seconded by a Princely pen, in a pithy poem directed to all persons of ranke or quality to leave the Court, and returne into their owne countrey."

† In confirmation of this remark, I shall beg leave to give, for the entertainment of my readers, the two following sketches of country-squires, as they existed towards the middle of the seventeenth, and commencement of the eighteenth century. "Mr Hastings," relates Gilpin from "*Hutchin's History of Dorsetshire*," "was low of stature, but strong and active, of a ruddy complexion with flaxen hair. His cloaths were always of green cloth, his house was of the old fashion; in the midst of a large park, well stocked with deer, rabbits, and fish-ponds. He had a long narrow bowling green in it; and used to play with round sand bowls. Here too he had a banquetting room built, like a stand, in a large tree. He kept all sorts of hounds, that ran buck, fox, hare, otter, and badger: and had hawks of all kinds, both long and short winged. His great hall was commonly strewed with marrow bones; and full of hawk-perches, hounds, spaniels, and terriers. The upper end of it was hung with fox-skins, of this and the last year's killing. Here and there a pole-cat was intermixed; and hunter's poles in great abundance. The parlour was a large room, compleatly furnished in the same style. On a broad hearth, paved with brick, lay some of the choicest terriers, hounds and spaniels. One or two of the great chairs had litters of cats in them, which were not to be disturbed. Of these, three or four always attended him at dinner, and a little white wand lay by his trencher, to defend it, if they were too troublesome. In the windows, which were very large, lay his arrows, cross-bows, and other accoutrements. The corners of the room were filled with his best hunting and hawking poles. His oyster table stood at the lower end of the room, which was in constant use twice a day, all the year round; for he never failed to eat oysters both at dinner and supper; with which the neighbouring town of Pool supplied him. At the upper end of the room stood a small table with a double desk; one side of which held a CHURCH BIBLE; the other the BOOK OF MARTYRS. On different tables in the room lay hawk's-hoods, bells, old hats, with their crowns thrust in, full of pheasant eggs; tables, dice, cards, and store of tobacco pipes. At one end of this room was a door, which opened into a closet, where stood bottles of strong beer and wine; which never came out but in single glasses, which was the rule of the house; for he never exceeded himself nor permitted others to exceed. Answering to this closet, was a door into an old chapel; which had been long disused for devotion; but in the pulpit, as the safest place, was always to be found a cold chine of beef, a venison pasty, a gammon of bacon, or a great apple-pye, with thick crust well baked. His table cost him not much, though it was good to eat at. His sports supplied all, but beef and mutton; except on Fridays, when he had the best of fish. He never wanted a London pudding; and he always sang it in with "My part lies therein-a." He drank a glass or two of wine at meals; put syrup of gilly-flowers into his sack; and had always a tun glass of small beer standing by him, which he often stirred about with rosemary. He lived to be an hundred; and never lost his eye sight, nor used spectacles. He got on horseback without help; and rode to the death of the stag, till he was past four score." Gilpin's *Forest Scenery*; vol. ii. p. 23, 26.

Mr Dibdin, in the second edition of his *Bibliomania*, the most pleasing and interesting book which Bibliography has ever produced, has quoted the above passage, and thus alludes, in his text, to the character which it describes—But what shall we say to Lord Shaftesbury's eccentric neighbour, *Henry Hastings*? who, in spite of his hawks, hounds, kittens, and oysters, could not forbear to indulge his book-propensities,

The country-clergyman, the next character we shall attempt to notice, was distinguished, in the time of Shakspeare, by the appellation of Sir: a title which the poet has uniformly bestowed on the inferior orders of this profession, as Sir Hugh in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Sir Topas in the *Twelfth Night*, Sir Oliver in *As You Like It*, and Sir Nathaniel in *Love's Labour's Lost*. This custom, which was not entirely discontinued until the close of the reign of Charles II., owes its origin to the language of our universities, which confers the designation of *Dominus* on those who have taken their first degree or bachelor of arts, and not, as has been supposed, to any claim which the clergy had upon the order of knighthood. The word *Dominus* was naturally translated Sir; and as almost every clergyman had taken his first degree, it became customary to apply the term to the lower class of the hierarchy.

"Sir seems to have been a title," remarks Dr. Percy, "formerly appropriated to such of the inferior clergy as were only *readers* of the service, and not admitted to be preachers, and therefore were held in the lowest estimation, as appears from a remarkable passage in Machell's MS. "Collections for the History of Westmoreland and Cumberland," in six volumes, folio, preserved in the Dean and Chapter's library at Carlisle. The Rev. Thomas Machell, author of the Collections, lived temp. Car. II. Speaking of the little chapel of Martindale in the mountains of Westmoreland and Cumberland, the writer says, 'There is little remarkable in or about it, but a neat chapel yard, which, by the peculiar care of the old reader, *Sir Richard*,* is kept clean, and as neat as a bowling-green.'

"Within the limit of myne own memory all *readers* in chapels were called *Sir*† and of old

though in a moderate degree! Let us fancy we see him, in his eightieth year, just alighted from the toils of the chase, and listening, after dinner, with his 'single glass' of ale by his side, to some old woman with 'spectacle on nose,' who reads to him a choice passage out of John Fox's 'Book of Martyrs!' A rare old boy was this Hastings." *Bibliomania*, p. 379.

Mr Grose, the antiquary, has given us, in his sketches of some worn-out characters of the last age, a most amusing portrait of the country squire of Queen Anne's days: "I mean," says he, "the little independent gentleman of three hundred pounds per annum, who commonly appeared in a plain drab or plush coat, large silver buttons, a jockey cap, and rarely without boots. His travels never exceeded the distance of the county town, and that only at assize and session time, or to attend an election. Once a week he commonly dined at the next market town, with the attornies and justices. This man went to church regularly, read the Weekly Journal, settled the parochial disputes between the parish officers at the vestry, and afterwards adjourned to the neighbouring ale-house, where he usually got drunk for the good of his country. He never played at cards but at Christmas, when a family pack was produced from the mantle-piece. He was commonly followed by a couple of grey-hounds and a pointer, and announced his arrival at a neighbour's house by smacking his whip, or giving the view-halloo. His drink was generally ale, except on Christmas, the fifth of November, or some other gala days, when he would make a bowl of strong brandy punch garnished with a toast and nutmeg. A journey to London was, by one of these men, reckoned as great an undertaking, as is at present a voyage to the East Indies, and undertaken with scarce less precaution and preparation.

"The mansion of one of these 'Squires was of plaister striped with timber, not unaptly called callimanco work, or of red brick, large casemented bow windows, a porch with seats in it, and over it a study; the eaves of the house well inhabited by swallows, and the court set round with holly-hocks. Near the gate a horse-block for the conveniency of mounting.

"The hall was furnished with flitches of Bacon, and the mantle-piece with guns and fishing rods of different dimensions, accompanied by the broad sword, partizan, and dagger, borne by his ancestor in the civil wars. The vacant spaces were occupied by stag's horns. Against the wall was posted King Charles's Golden Rules, Vincent Wing's Almanack, and a portrait of the Duke of Marlborough; in his window lay Baker's Chronicle, Fox's Book of Martyrs, Glanvil on Apparitions, Quincey's Dispensatory, the Complete Justice, and a Book of Farriery.

"In the corner, by the fire side, stood a large wooden two-armed chair with a cushion; and within the chimney corner were a couple of seats. Here, at Christmas, he entertained his tenants assembled round a glowing fire made of the roots of trees, and other great logs, and told and heard the traditionary tales of the village respecting ghosts and witches, till fear made them afraid to move. In the mean time the jorum of ale was in continual circulation.

"The best parlour, which was never opened but on particular occasions, was furnished with Turk-worked chain, and hung round with portraits of his ancestors; the men in the character of shepherds, with their crooks, dressed in full suits and huge full-bottomed perukes; others in complete armour or buff coats, playing on the base viol or lute. The females likewise, as shepherdesses, with the lamb and crook, all habited in high heads and flowing robes.

"Alas! these men and these houses are no more!"

Grose's Olio, 2d edit. 1796. p. 41—14.

* Richard Berket Reader, æt. 74, MS. note.

† In the margin is a MS. note seemingly in the hand-writing of Bishop Nicholson, who gave these volumes to the library:

"Since I can remember there was not a reader in any chapel but was called *Sir*."

have been writ so ; whence, I suppose, such of the laity as received the noble order of knighthood being called *Sirs* too, for distinction sake had *Knight* writ after them ; which had been superfluous, if the title *Sir* had been peculiar to them." *

Shakspeare has himself indeed sufficiently marked the distinction between priesthood and knighthood, when he makes Viola say, " I am one that had rather go with Sir Priest than Sir Knight." †

Were we to estimate the character of the country-clergy, during the age of Elizabeth, from the sketches which Shakspeare has given us of them, I am afraid we should be induced to appreciate their utility and moral virtue on too low a scale. It will be a fairer plan to exhibit the picture from the delineation of one of their own order, a competent judge, and who was likewise a contemporary.

" The apparell of our clergiemmen," records Harrison, " is comlie, and, in truth, more decent than ever it was in the popish church : before the universities bound their graduats unto a stable attire, afterward usurped also even by the blind Sir Johns. For if you peruse well my chronologie, you shall find, that they went either in diverse colors, like plaiers, or in garments of light hew, as yellow, red, greene, etc. : with their shoes piked, their haire crisped, their girdles armed with silver ; their shoes, spurres, bridles, etc, buckled with like metall : their apparell (for the most part) of silke, and richie furred ; their cappes laced and butned with gold : so that to meet a priest in those daies, was to behold a peacock that spreadeth his taile when he danseth before the henne : which now (I saie) is well reformed. Touching hospitalitie, there was never any'greater used in England, sith by reason that marriage is permitted to him that will choose that kind of life, their meat and drinke is more orderly and frugallie dressed ; their furniture of houshold more convenient, and better looked unto ; and the poore oftener fed generallie than heretofore they have beene." Then, alluding to those who reproach the country-clergy for not being so prodigal of good cheer as in former days, he adds, " To such as doo consider of the curtailing of their livings, or excessive prices whereunto things are growen, and how their course is limited by law, and estate looked into on every side, the cause of their so dooing is well inough perceived. This also offendeth manie, that they should after their deaths leave their substances to their wives and children : whereas they consider not, that in old time such as had no lemans nor bastards (verie few were there God wot of this sort) did leave their goods and possessions to their brethren and kinsfolk, whereby (as I can shew by good record) manie houses of gentilitie have growen and been erected. If in anie age some one of them did found a college, almes-house, or schoole, if you looke unto these our times, you shall see no fewer deeds of charitie doone, nor better grounded upon the right stub of pietie than before. If you saie that their wives be fond, after the decease of their husbands, and bestow themselves not so advisedlie as their calling requireth, which God knoweth these curious surveiors make small accompt of in truth, further than thereby to gather matter of reprehension : I beseech you then to look into all states of the laitie, and tell me whether some duchesses, countesses, barons, or knight's wives, doo not fullie so often offend in the like as they : for Eve will be Eve, though Adam would saie naie. Not a few also find fault with our thread-bare gowns, as if not our patrons but our wives were causes of our wo : but if it were knowne to all, that I know to have been performed of late in Essex, where a minister taking a benefice (of lesse than twentie pounds in the Quéen's bookes so farre as I remember) was inforced to paie to his patrone, twentie quarters of otes, ten quarters of wheat, and sixtéene yéerlie of barleie, which he called hawkes-meat ; and another left the like in farme to his patrone fortien pounds by the yéere, which is well worth fortie at the least, the cause of our threadbare gowns would easile appeere, for such patrones doo scrape the wool from our clokes." ‡

This delineation is, upon the whole, a favourable one ; but the author in the very next page admits that the country-clergy had notwithstanding fallen into " general contempt" and " small consideration ;" that the cause of this was not merely owing to the poverty of the ministry, but was for the most part attributable either to the iniquity of the patron or the immorality of the priest, will but too clearly appear from the relation of Harrison himself, and from other contemporary evidence. The historian declares that it was the custom of some patrons to " bestow advowsons of benefices upon their bakers, butlers, cookes, good archers, falconers, and horsekeepers, instead of other recompence for their long and faithfull service ; § and the following letter from the Talbot papers presents us with a

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 8. note.

† Holinshed, vol. i. p. 233, 234.

‡ Twelfth Night, act. iii. sc. 4.

§ *Ibid.* vol. i. 231.

frightful view of the manners of the country-clergy at the commencement of the reign of James I.

“ Ad. Slack to the Lady Bowes.

“ Right wor.^{ll}

“ I understand that one Raphe Cleaton ys curate of the chappell at Buxton; his wages are, out of his neighbour's benevolence, about v^l yearly: S^r Charles Cavendishe had the tythes there this last yeare, ether of his owne right or my Lords, as th' inhabitants saye. The minister aforenamed differeth litle from those of the worste sorte, and had dipt his finger both in manslaughter and p^rjurie, etc. The placinge or displacing of the curate there resteth in Mr. Walker, commissarie of Bakewell, of which churche Buxton is a chappell of ease.

“ I humbly thanke yo^r Wor^{pp} for yo^r I^{re} to the justices at the cessions; for S^r Peter Fretchwell, together wth Mr. Bainbrigg, were verie earnest against the badd vicar of Hope; and lykewyse S^r Jermane Poole, and all the benche, savinge Justice Bentley, who use some vaine——on his behalfe, and affirmed that my La. Bowes had been disprooved before My Lord of Shrowesburie in reports touching the vicar of Hope; but such answeare was made therto as his mouthe was stopped: yet the latter daie, when all the justic's but himselfe and one other were rysen, he wold have had the said vicar lycensed to sell ale in his vicaredge, althoe the whole benche had commanded the contrarye; whereof S^r Jermane Poole being adv^tised, retyrned to the benche (contradicting his speeche) whoe, wth Mr. Bainbrigg, made their warrant to bringe before them, him, or anie other person that shall, for him, or in his vicardige, brue, or sell ale, &c. He ys not to bee punished by the Justices for the multytude of his women, untill the basterds whereof he is the reputed father bee brought in. I am the more boulde to wryte so longe of this sorrie matter, in respect you maye take so much better knowledge of S^r Jo. Bentley, and his p^rtialytie in so vile a cause; and esteeme and judge of him accordinge to y^r wisdom and good discretion. Thus, humbly cravinge p^rdon, I committ y^r good Wors. to the everlasting Lorde, who ever kepe you. This 12th of Octob. 1609.

“ Yo^r La' humble poore tenant, at comandm^t.

AD. SLACK.*

“ To the right wor^{ll} my good Ladie, the La. Bowes of Walton, geive theise.”

That men who could thus debase themselves should be held in little esteem and their services ill requited, cannot excite our wonder; and we consequently read without surprise, that in the days of Elizabeth, the minstrel and the cook were often better paid than the priest;—thus on the books of the Stationers' Company for the year 1510, may be found the following entry:

	s.	d.
“ Item, payd to the preacher	vi	2
Item, payd to the minstrell	xij	0
Item paid to the coke	xv	0”

Let us not conclude, however, that the age of Shakspeare was without instances of a far different kind, and that religion and virtue were altogether excluded from what ought to have been their most favoured abode; it will be sufficient to mention the name of Bernard Gilpin, the most exemplary of parish-priests, whose humility, benevolence, and exalted piety were never exceeded, and whose ministerial labours were such as to form a noble contrast to the shameful neglect of the pastoral care which existed around him. Indeed we are inclined to infer, notwithstanding the numerous individual instances of profligacy and dissipation which may be brought forward, that the country clergy then, as now, if considered in the aggregate, possessed more real virtue and utility than any other equally numerous body of men; but that aberrations from the stricter decency of their order were, as is still very properly the case in the present day, marked with avidity, and censured with abhorrence. To the younger clergy in the country, also, was frequently committed the task of education, a labour of unspeakable importance, but in the period of which we are writing, attended too often with the most underserved contumely and contempt. In the Schole-master of Ascham may be found the most bitter complaints of the barbarous and disgraceful treatment of the able instructor of youth; and the following sketches of the clerical tutor from Peacham and Hall, will still further heighten and authenticate the picture. The former of these writers observes,

* Lodge's Illustrations, vol. iii. p. 391.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 221, note 7.

“ Such is the most base and ridiculous parsimony of many of our Gentlemen, (if I may so terme them) that if they can procure some poore Batchelor of Art from the Universitie to teach their children to say grace, and serve the cure of an impropriation, who wanting meanes and friends, will be content upon the promise of ten pounds a yeere at his first comming, to be pleased with five; the rest to be set off in hope of the next advouson (which perhaps was sold before the young man was borne): Or if it chance to fall in his time, his lady or master tels him; ‘ Indeed Sir we are beholden unto you for your paines, such a living is lately falne, but I had before made a promise of it to my butler or bailiffe, for his true and extraordinary service.’

“ Is it not commonly seene, that the most Gentlemen will give better wages, and deale more bountifully with a fellow who can but a dogge, or reclaime a hawke, than upon an honest, learned, and well qualified man to bring up their children? It may be, hence it is, that dogges are able to make syllogismes in the fields, when their young masters can conclude nothing at home, if occasion of argument or discourse be offered at the table.” *

The domestic chaplain of Bishop Hall is touched with a glowing pencil, and while it faithfully exhibits the servile and depressed state of the poor tutor, is, at the same time, wrought up with much point and humour.

“ A gentle squire would gladly entertaine
 Into his house some trencher-chapelaine;
 Some willing man, that might instruct his sons,
 And that would stand to good conditions.
 First, that he lie upon the truckle-bed,
 While his young maister lieth o’er his head:
 Second, that he do, upon no default,
 Never presume to sit above the salt:
 Third, that he never change his trencher twice;
 Fourth, that he use all common courtesies:
 Sit bare at meales, and one half rise and wait:
 Last, that he never his young maister beat;
 But he must aske his mother to define
 How manie jerks she would his breech should line.
 All these observ’d, he could contented be,
 To give five markes, and winter liverie.” †

From the description of the character of the country clerical tutor, it is an easy transition to that of the rural pedagogue or schoolmaster, a personage of not less consequence in the days of Elizabeth, than in the present period. He frequently combined, indeed, in the sixteenth century, the reputation of a conjuror with that of a schoolmaster, and accordingly in the Comedy of Errors, Pinch, in the dramatic personæ, is described as “ a schoolmaster, and a conjuror,” and the following not very amiable portrait of his person is given towards the conclusion of the play:—

“ They brought one Pinch; a hungry lean-faced villain,
 A meer anatomy, a mountebank,
 A thread-bare juggler, and a fortune-teller
 A needy, hollow-eye’d, sharp-looking wretch,
 A living dead man: this pernicious slave,
 Forsooth, took him on as conjuror.” ‡

Ben Jonson also alludes to this union of occupations when he says, “ I would have ne’er a cunning schoolemaster in England, I mean a Cunningman as a schoolemaster; that is, a Conjurour.” §

A less formidable figure of a schoolmaster has been given us by Shakspeare, under the character of Holofernes, in Love’s Labour’s Lost, where he has drawn a full-length caricature of the too frequent pedantry of this profession. Yet Holofernes, though he speak “ a leash of languages at once,” is not deficient either in ability or discrimination; he ridicules with much good sense and humour

* The Compleat Gentleman. Fashioning him absolut, in the most necessary and commendable Qualities concerning Minde or Body that may be required in a Noble Gentleman. By Henry Peacham Master of Arts: Sometime of Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge.

This book, which is written in an easy and elegant style, was published in 1622, and has been several times reprinted; it is a work of considerable interest and amusement, and throws much light on the education and literature of its times.

† Hall’s Satires, Book ii. sat. 67.

‡ Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xx. p. 451.

§ The Staple of Newes, the third Intermeade after the third act.

the literary fops of his days, the "rackers of orthography;" and his conversation is described by his friend, Sir Nathaniel, the Curate, as possessing all the requisites to perfection. "Sir: your reasons at dinner have been sharp and sententious; pleasant without scurrility, witty without affection, audacious without impudency, learned without opinion, and strange without heresy." * "It is very difficult," remarks Dr. Johnson, "to add any thing to this character of the schoolmaster's table talk, and perhaps all the precepts of Castiglione will scarcely be found to comprehend a rule for conversation so justly delineated, so widely dilated, and so nicely limited." †

The country-schoolmasters in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, were, however, if we trust to accounts of Ascham and Peacham, in general many degrees below the pedagogue of Shakspeare in ability; tyranny and ignorance appear to have been their chief characteristics; to such an extent, indeed, were they deficient in point of necessary knowledge, that Peacham, speaking of bad masters, declares, "it is a generall plague and complaint of the whole land; for, for one discreet and able teacher, you shall finde twenty ignorant and carelesse; who (among so many fertile and delicate wits as England affordeth) whereas they make one scholler, they marre ten." ‡

Ascham had endeavoured, by every argument and mode of persuasion in his power, to check the severe and indiscriminate discipline which prevailed among the teachers in his time; it would seem in vain; for Peacham, about the year 1620, found it necessary to recommend lenity in equally strenuous terms, and has given a minute and we have no doubt a faithful picture of the various cruelties to which scholars were then subjected; a summary of the result of this conduct may be drawn from his own words where he says, "Masters for the most part so behave themselves, that their very name is hatefull to the scholler who trembleth at their comming in, rejoyceth at their absence, and looketh his master (returned) in the face, as his deadly enemy." §

To the charges of undue severity and defective literature, we must add, I am afraid, the infinitely more weighty accusation of frequent immorality and buffoonery. Ludovicus Vives, who wrote just before the age of Shakspeare, asserts, that "some schoolmasters taught Ovid's books of love to their scholars, and some made expositions, and expounded the vices;"** and Peacham, at the close of the era we are considering, censures in the strongest terms their too common levity and misconduct:

"The diseases whereunto some of them are very subject, are *humour* and *folly* (that I may say nothing of the grosse ignorance and insufficiency of many) whereby they become ridiculous and contemptible both in the schoole and abroad. Hence it comes to passe, that in many places, especially in Italy, of all professions that of *pedanteria* is held in basest repute: the schoole-master almost in every comedy being brought upon the stage, to parallel the *Zani* or *Pantaloun*. He made us good sport in that excellent comedy of *Pedantius*, acted in our Trinity Colledge in Cambridge, and if I be not deceived, in *Priscianus Vapulans*, and many of our English plays.

"I knew one, who in winter would ordinarily in a cold morning whip his boyes over for no other purpose than to get himselfe a heat: another beat them for swearing, and all the while he swears himselfe with horrible oathes, he would forgive any fault saving that.

"I had I remember myselfe (neere S. Albanes in Hertfordshire, where I was borne) a master, who by no entreaty would teach any scholler he had, farther than his father had learned before him; as, if he had onely learned but to reade English, the sonne, though he went with him seven yeeres, should goe no further: his reason was, they would then proove saucy rogues and controule their fathers: yet these are they that oftentimes have our hopefull gentry under their charge and tuition, to bring them in science and civility." ††

We must, I apprehend, from these representations, be induced to conclude, that ignorance, despotism, and self-sufficiency were leading features in the composition

* Act v. sc. 1.

‡ Compleat Gentleman, p. 22. edit. of 1634.

** Instruction of a Christian Woman, 4to. edit. of 1557.

†† Compleat Gentleman, p. 26, 27.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. vii. p. 132. note 7.

§ *Ibid.* p. 25.

of the country-schoolmaster, during this period of our annals ; it would not be just, however, to infer from these premises that the larger schools were equally unfortunate in their conductors ; on the contrary, most of the public seminaries of the capital, and many in the large provincial towns, were under the regulation of masters highly respectable for their erudition ; men, indeed, to whom neither Erasmus nor Joseph Scaliger would have refused the title of ripe and good scholars.

We shall now pass forward, in the series of our rural characters, to the delineation of one of great importance in a national point of view, that of the substantial Farmer or Yeoman, of whom Harrison has left us the following interesting definition :—

“ This sort of people have a certaine preheminance, and more estimation than labourers and the common sort of artificers, and these commonlie live wealthilie, kéepe good houses, and travel to get riches. They are also for the most part farmers to gentlemen, or at the leastwise artificers, and with grazing, frequenting of markets, and keeping of servants (not idle servants, as the gentlemen doo, but such as get both their owne and part of their masters living) do come to great welth, in somuch that manie of them are able and doo buie the lands of unthriftie gentlemen, and often setting their sonnes to the schooles, to the universities, and to the ins of the court ; or otherwise leaving them sufficient lands whereupon they may live without labour, doo make them by those meanes to become gentlemen : these were they that in times past made all France afraid. And albeit they be not called master, as gentlemen are, or sir as to knights apperteineth, but onelie John and Thomas, &c. : yet have they beene found to have doone verie good service : and the kings of England in foughten battels, were woont to remaine among them (who were their footmen) as the French kings did amongst their horsemen : the prince thereby shewing where his chiefe strength did consist.” *

After this description of the rank which the farmer held in society we shall proceed to state the mode in which he commonly lived in the age of Elizabeth ; and in doing this we have chosen, as usual, to adopt at considerable length the language of our old writers ; a practice to which we shall in future adhere, while detailing the manners, customs, etc. of our ancestors, a practice which has indeed peculiar advantages ; for the authenticity of the source is at once apparent, the diction possesses a peculiar charm from its antique cast, and the expression has a raciness and force of colouring, which owes its origin to actual inspection, and which, consequently, it is in vain to expect, on such subjects, from modern composition.

The houses or cottages of the farmer were built, in places abounding in wood, in a very strong and substantial manner, with not more than four, six, or nine inches between stud and stud ; but in the open and champagne country, they were compelled to use more flimsy materials, with here and there a a girding to which they fastened their splints, and then covered the whole with thick clay to keep out the wind. “ Certes this rude kind of building,” says Harrison, “ made the Spaniards in quéene Maries daies to wonder, but chéefflie when they saw what large diet was used in manie of these so homelie cottages, in so much that one of no small reputation amongst them said after this manner : ‘ These English (quoth he) have their houses made of sticks and durt, but they fare commonlie so well as the king.’ Whereby it appeareth that he liked better of our good fare in such coarse cabins, than of their owne thin diet in their prince-like habitations and palaces.” † The cottages of the peasantry usually consisted of but two rooms on the ground-floor, the outer for the servants, the inner for the master and his family, and they were thatched with straw or sedge ; while the dwelling of the substantial farmer was distributed into several rooms ; above and beneath was coated with white lime or cement, and was very neatly roofed with reed ; hence Tusser, speaking of the farm-house, gives the following directions for repairing and preserving its thatch in the month of May :

“ Where houses be reeded (as houses have need)
Now pare of the mosse, and go beat in the reed :

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 275.

† Holinshed, vol. i. p. 315.

The juster ye drive it, the smother and plaine,
More handsome ye make it, to shut off the raine." *

A few years before the era of which we are treating, the venerable Hugh Latimer, describing in one of his impressive sermons the economy of a farmer in his time, tells us that his father, who was a yeoman, had no land of his own, but only "a farm of three or four pounds by the year at the utmost; and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had a walk for an hundred sheep; and my mother milked thirty kine. He kept his son at school till he went to the university, and maintained him there; he married his daughters with five pounds or twenty nobles a piece; he kept hospitality with his neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor; and all this he did out of the said farm." †

Land let, at this period, it should be remembered, at about a shilling per acre; but in the reign of Elizabeth its value rapidly increased, together with a proportional augmentation of the comfort of the farmer, who even began to exhibit the elegancies and luxuries of life. Of the change which took place in rural economy towards the close of the sixteenth century, the following faithful and interesting picture has been drawn by the pencil of Harrison, who, noticing the additional splendour of gentlemen's houses, remarks,—

"In times past the costlie furniture staid *there*, whereas now it is descended yet lower, even unto manie farmers, who by vertue of their old and not of their new leases, have for the most part learned also to garnish their cupbords with plate, their ioined beds with tapistrie and silke hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine naperie, whereby the wealth of our countrie (God be praised therefore, and give us grace to imploie it well) dooth infinitlie appeare. Neither doo I speake this in reproch of anie man, God is my judge, but to shew that I do rejoyse rather, to see how God hath blessed us with his good gifts; and whilst I behold how that in a time wherein all things are growen to most excessive prices, and what commoditie so ever is to be had, is daily plucked from the commonaltie by such as looke in to everie trade, we doo yet find the means to obtain and atchive such furniture as here to fore hath beene impossible. There are old men yet dwelling in the village where I remaine, which have noted three things to be marvellouslie altered in England within their sound remembrance; and other three things too too much encreased. *One* is, the multitude of chimnies latelie erected, whereas in their yoong daies there were not above two or three, if so manie in most uplandish townes of the realme, (the religious houses, and manor places of their lords alwaies excepted, and peradventure some great personages) but ech one made his fire against a rere dosse in the hall, where he dined and dressed his meat.

"The *second* is the great (although not generall) amendment of lodging, for (said they) our fathers (yea and wee ourselves also) have lien full oft upon straw pallets, on rough mats covered onlie with a shéet, under coverlets made of dagswain or hop harlots (I use their owne termes), and a good round log under their heads instead of a bolster or pillow. If it were so that our fathers or the good man of the house, had within seven yeares after his mariage purchased a mattress or flockebed, and thereto a sacke of chaffe to rest his head upon, he thought himselfe to be as well lodged as the lord of the towne, that peradventure laie seldome in a bed of downe or whole fethers; so well were they contented, and with such base kind of furniture: which also is not verie much amended as yet in some parts of Bedfordshire, and elsewhere further off from our southerne parts. Pillowes (said they) were thought méet onelie for women in child bed. As for servants, if they had anie shéet above them it was well, for seldome had they anie under their bodies, to kéepe them from the pricking straws that ran oft through the canvas of the pallet, and rased their hardened hides.

"The *third* thing they tell of, is the exchange of vessell, as of treene platters into pewter, and wodden spoones into silver or tin. For so common was all sorts of tréene stuff in old time, that a man should hardlie find four péeces of pewter (of which one was peradventure a salt) in a good farmer's house, and yet for all this frugalitie (if it may so be justly called) they were scarce able to live and paie their rents at their daies without selling of a cow, or an horsse, or more, although they paid but foure pounds at the uttermost by the yeare. Such also was their povertie, that if some one od farmer or husbandman had béene at the alehouse, a thing greatlie used in those daies, amongst six or seven of his neighbours, and there in a braverie to shew what store he had, did

* Three editions of Tusser's Poem on Husbandry are now before me; the first printed in 1557, entitled, "A hundreth good Pointes of Husbandrie;" the 4to. edition of 1586, termed "Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie;" and "Tusser Redivivus," by Daniel Hilman, first published in 1710, and again in 1744; the quatrain just quoted is from the copy of 1744, p. 56.

† Gilpin's Life of Latimer, p. 2.

cast down his purse, and therein a noble or six shillings in silver, unto them (for few such men then cared for gold, because it was not so readie paiment, and they were oft inforced to give a penie for the exchange of an angell) it was verie likelie that all the rest could not laie downe so much against it : whereas in my time, although peradventure foure poundes of old rent be improved to fortie, fiftie, or an hundred pounds, yet will the farmer as another palme or date tree thinke his gaines verie small toward the end of his terme, if he have not six or seven yeares rent lieing by him, therewith to purchase a new lease, beside a faire garnish of pewter on his cupbord, with so much in od vessell going about the house, threé or foure feather beds, so manie coverlids and carpets of tapistrie, a silver salt, a bowle for wine (if not an whole neast) and a dozen of spoones to furnish up the sute.”*

To this curious delineation of the furniture and household accommodation of the farmer, it will be necessary, in order to complete the sketch, to add a few things relative to his diet and hospitality. Contrary to what has taken place in modern times, the hours for meals were later with the artificer and the husbandman than with the higher order of society; the farmer and his servants usually sitting down to dinner at one o'clock, and to supper at seven, while the nobleman and gentleman took the first at eleven in the morning, and the second at five in the afternoon.

It would appear that, from the cottage to the palace, good eating was as much cultivated in the days of Elizabeth as it has been in any subsequent period; and the rites of hospitality, more especially in the country, were observed with a frequency and cordiality which a further progress in civilisation has rather tended to check than to increase.

Of the larder of the cotter and the shepherd, and of the hospitality of the former, a pretty accurate idea may be acquired from the simple yet beautiful strains of an old pastoral bard of Elizabeth's days, who, describing a nobleman fatigued by the chase, the heat of the weather, and long fasting, adds that he—

“ Did house him in a peakish graunge
Within a forrest great :

Wheare, knowne, and welcom'd, as the place
And persons might afforde,
Browne bread, whig, bacon, curds, and milke,
Were set him on the borde :

A cushion made of lists, a stoole
Half backed with a houpe,
Were brought him, and he sitteth down
Besides a sorry coupe.

The poor old couple wish't their bread
Were wheat, their whig were perry,
Their bacon beefe, their milke and curds
Weare creame, to make him mery.” †

The picture of the shepherd youth is so exquisitely drawn that, though only a portion of it is illustrative of our subject, we cannot avoid giving so much of the text as will render the figure complete.

“ Sweet growte, or whig, his bottle had
As much as it might hold :

A sheeve of bread as browne as nut,
And cheese as white as snowe,
And wildings, or the season's fruite,
He did in scrip bestow :

And whil'st his py-bald curre did sleepe,
And sheep-hooke lay him by,
On hollow quilles of oten strawe
He piped melody :—

- - - - - With the sun
He doth his flocke unfold,
And all the day on hill or plaine
He merrie chat can hold :

And with the sun doth folde againe ;
Then jogging home betime,
He turnes a crab, or tunes a round,
Or sings some merrie ryme :

*Nor lackes he gleeful tales to tell,
Whil'st round the bole doth trot ;
And sitteth singing care away,
Till he to bed hath got.*

Theare sleeps he soundly all the night,
Forgetting morrow cares,
Nor feares he blasting of his corne
Nor uttering of his wares,

Or stormes by seas, or stirres on land,
Or cracke of credite lost,
Not spending franklier than his flocke
Shall still defray the cost.

Wel wot I, sooth they say that say :
More quiet nightes and daies
The shepheard sleepes and wakes than he
Whose cattel he doth graize.” ‡

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 317, 318.

† Warner's Albion's England, chap. 42. Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 602.

‡ Warner in Chalmers's Poets, vol. iv. p. 552, 553.

The lines in *Italics* allude to the favourite beverage of the peasantry, and the mode in which they recreated themselves over the spicy bowl. To “turne a crab” is to roast a wilding or wild apple in the fire, for the purpose of being thrown hissing hot into a bowl of nut-brown ale, into which had been previously put a toast with some spice and sugar. To this delicious compound Shakspeare has frequently referred; thus, in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* one of his designations of winter is,

“ When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl : ” *

and Puck, describing his own wanton tricks, in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, says—

“ And sometime lurk I in a gossip’s bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob.” †

The very expression to turn a crab will be found in the following passages from two old plays, in the first of which the good man says he will

“ Sit down in his chaire by his wife faire Alison,
And turne a crabbe in the fire ; ” ‡

and in the second, Christmas is personified

——“ sitting in a corner turning crabs,
Or coughing o’er a warmed pot of ale.” §

Nor can we omit, in closing this series of quotations, the following stanzas of a fine old song in the curious comedy of “*Gammer Gurton’s Needle*,” first printed in 1575:

“ I love no rost, but a nut brown toste,
and a crab layde in the fyre ;
A lytle bread shall do me stead,
much bread I not desyre.

No froste nor snow, no winde, I trow,
Can hurte me if I wolde,
I am so wrapt, and throwly lapt
of joly good ale, and olde.

Back and syde go bare, go bare,
booth foote and hande go colde ;
But belly, God sende thee good ale ynoughe,
whether it be newe or olde.” **

To tell gleeful tales, “whilst round the bole doth trot,” was an amusement much more common among our ancestors, during the age of Elizabeth, and the subsequent century, than it has been in any later period. The *Winter’s Tale* of Shakspeare owes its title to this custom, of which an example is placed before us in the first scene of the second act.

Her. Come, Sir—

—— Pray you, sit by us,
And tell ’s a tale.

Mam. Merry, or sad, shal’t be ?

Her. As merry as you will. ††

And Burton, the first edition of whose “*Anatomy of Melancholy*” was published in 1617, enumerates, among the ordinary recreations of Winter, “merry tales of errant knights, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, cheaters, witches, fayries, goblins, friars, etc.—which some delight to hear, some to tell;

* Act v. sc. 2. Song at the conclusion.

† Damon and Pithias, 1582.

** Introductory Song to the second act.

†† Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. ix. p. 255.

‡ Act ii. sc. 1.

§ Summer’s Last Will and Testament, by Nash, 1600]

Vide Ancient British Drama, vol. i.

all are well pleased with;" and he remarks shortly afterwards, "when three or four good companions meet, they tell old stories by the fire-side, or in the sun, as old folks usually do, remembering afresh and with pleasure antient matters, and such like accidents, which happened in their younger years." * Milton also, in his "L'Allegro," first printed in 1645, gives a conspicuous station

—— "to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat:"

and adds,

"Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lull'd to sleep . †

The farmer's daily diet may be drawn with sufficient accuracy from the curious old Georgic of Tusser, a poem which, more than any other that we possess, throws light upon the agricultural manners and customs of the age. In Lent, says this entertaining bard, the farmer must in the first place consume his red herring, and afterwards his salt fish, which should be kept in store, indeed, and considered as good even when Lent is past; and with these leeks and peas should be procured for pottage, with the view of saving milk, oatmeal, and bread: at Easter veale and bacon are to be the chief articles; at Martilmas salted beef, "when country folk do dainties lack:" at Midsummer, when mackrel are out of season, grasse (that is sallads, etc.), fresh beef and pease: at Michaelmas fresh herring and fatted ‡ crones: at All Saints pork and souse, sprats and spurlings: at Christmas he enjoins the farmer to "plaie and make good cheere," and he concludes by advising him, as was the custom in Elizabeth's time, to observe Fridays, Saturdays, and Wednesdays as fish-days; to "keep embrings well and fasting dayes," and if fish and fruit be scarce, to supply their want with butter and cheese. § To these recommendations he adds, in another place, that

"Good ploughmen look weekly, of custom and right,
For rostmeat on sundaies, and thursday at night:"

and he subsequently gives directions for writing what he terms "husbandlie posies," that is, economical proverbs in rhyme, to be hung up in the Hall, the parlour, the ghest's chamber, and the good man's own bed chamber. **

If the farmer have a visitor, our worthy bard is not illiberal in his allowance, but advises him to place three dishes on his table at dinner, well dressed, which, says he, will be sufficient to please your friend, and will *become* your Hall. ††

On days of feasting and rejoicing, however, it appears to have been a common custom for the guests to bring their victuals with them, forming as it were a picnic meal; thus, Harrison, describing the occasional mirth and hospitality of the farmer, says,—

"In feasting the husbandmen doo exceed after their manner: especiallie at bridalles, purifications of women, and such od meetings, where it is incredible to tell what meat is consumed and spent, ech one bringing such a dish, or so manie with him as his wife and he doo consult upon, but alwaies with this consideration, that the léefér fréend shall have the better provision. This also is commonlie séene at these bankets, that the good man of the house is not charged with any thing saving bread, drink, sauce, houseroome, and fire. (He then gives us the following naïve and pleasing picture of their festivity and content.) The husbandmen are sufficientlie liberall, and verie fréendlie at their tables, and when they méet, they are so merie without malice, and plaine without inward Italian or French craft and subiltie, that it would doo a man good to be in companie among them. Herein only are the inferiour sort somewhat to be blamed, that being thus assembled, their talke is now and then such as savoureth of scurrilitie and ribaldrie, a thing

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 172, 173., eighth edition of 1676.

† Milton's Poems by Warton, second edition, p. 56, 61.

‡ Crones are ewes whose teeth are so worn down, that they can no longer live in their sheep-walk; but will sometimes, if put into good pasture, thrive exceedingly.

§ Tusser, 4to. edit. 1586., chap. 12. fol. 25, 26.

** Ibid. of 1586, fol. 133.

†† Ibid. fol. 138, 144, 145.

naturallie incident to carters and clowns, who thinke themselves not to be merie and welcome, if their foolish veines in this behalfe be never so little restrained. This is moreover to be added in these meetings, that if they happen to stumble upon a péece of venison, and a cup of wine or verie strong beere or ale (which latter they commonlie provide against their appointed daies) they thinke their chéere so great, and themselves to have fared so well, as the lord Maior of London, with whome when their bellies be full they will not often sticke to make comparison, (saying, *I have dined so well as my lord maior*) because that of a subject there is no publike officer of anie citie in Europe, that may compare in port and countenance with him during the time of his office.” *

The dress of the farmer during the middle of the sixteenth century was plain and durable; consisting, for common purposes, of coarse gray cloth or fustian, in the form of trunk-hose, frock, or doublet.

To his account of the farmer's mode of living, it will be proper to add a brief description of his coadjutor in domestic economy, the English housewife, a personage of no small importance; for, as honest Tusser has justly observed,

“ House keping and husbandry, if it be good,
must love one another, as cousinnes in blood.
The wife to, must husband as well as the man,
or farewell thy husbandry, doe what thou can.” †

Of the qualifications necessary to constitute this useful character, Gervase Markham has given us a very curious detail, in his work entitled “*The English Housewife*,” which, though not published until the close of the Shakspearian era, appears, from the dedication to Frances, Countess Dowager of Exeter, to have been written long anterior to its transmission to the press; for it is there said, “That much of it was a manuscript which many years ago belonged to an honourable Countess, one of the greatest glories of our ‡ kingdom.” It is a delineation which, as supposed of easy practical application, does honour to the sex and to the age. After expatiating on the necessity of a religious example to her household, on the part of the good housewife, he thus proceeds:

“Next unto her sanctity and holiness of life it is meet that our English Housewife be a woman of great modesty and temperance, as well inwardly as outwardly; inwardly, as in her behaviour and carriage towards her husband, wherein she shall shun all violence of rage, passion and humour, coveting less to direct than to be directed, appearing ever unto him pleasant, amiable and delightful; and, tho’ occasion of mishaps, or the mis-government of his will may induce her to contrary thoughts yet vertuously to suppress them, and with a mild sufferance rather to call him home from his error, than with the strength of anger to abate the least spark of his evil, calling into her mind, that evil and uncomely language is deformed, though uttered even to servants; but most monstrous and ugly, when it appears before the presence of a husband: outwardly, as in her apparel, and dyet, both which she shall proportion according to the competency of her husband's estate and calling, making her circle rather strait than large: for it is a rule, if we extend to the uttermost, we take away increase; if we go a hairs bredth beyond, we enter into consumption: but if we preserve any part, we build strong forts against the adversaries of fortune, provided that such preservation be honest and conscionable: for as lavish prodigality is brutish, so miserable covetousness is hellish. Let therefore the Housewife's garments be comely and strong, made as well to preserve the health, as to adorn the person, altogether without toyish garnishes, or the gloss of light colours, and as far from the vanity of new and fantastick fashions, as near to the comely imitation of modest matrons. Let her dyet be wholesome and cleanly, prepared at due hours, and cook'd with care and diligence; let it be rather to satisfie nature, than her affections, and *apter* to kill *hunger* than revive *new* appetites; let it proceed *more* from the provision of her own yard, than the furniture of the markets; and let it be rather esteemed for the familiar acquaintance she hath without it, than for the strangeness and rarity it bringeth from other countries.

“To conclude, our English Housewife must be of chaste thoughts, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbour-hood,

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 282.

† Tusser, first edit. of 1557, title-page.

‡ The English House-Wife, containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a Compleat Woman. Ninth edition, 1683. Dedication.

wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful in the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation." *

These knowledges, he then states, should consist in an intimacy with domestic physic, with cookery, with the distillation of waters, with the making and dying of cloth, with the conduct of dairies, and with malting, brewing, and baking; for all which he gives very ample directions. Markham, indeed, seems to have taken the greater part of this picture from his predecessor Tusser, in whose poems on husbandry may be found, among many others, the following excellent precepts for the conduct of the good house-wife:—

" In Marche and in Aprill from morning to night :
in sowing and setting good huswives delight.
To have in their garden or some other plot :
to trim up their house and to furnish their pot.

Have millons at Mihelmas, parsneps in lent :
in June, buttred beanes, saveth fish to be spent.
With those and good pottage inough having than :
thou winnest the heart of thy laboring man.

From Aprill begin til saint Andrew be past :
so long with good huswives their dairies doe last.
Good milche bease and pasture, good husbandes provide :
good huswives know best all the rest how to guide.

But huswives, that learne not to make their owne cheese :
with trusting of others, have thes for their feese :
Their milke slapt in corners their creame al to sost :
their milk pannes so flotte, that their cheeses be lost.

Where some of a kowe maketh yerely a pounce :
these huswives crye creake for their voice will not sounde.
The servauntes suspecting their dame, lye in waighte :
with one thing or other they trudge away straight.

Then neighbour (for god's sake) if any such be ;
if you know a good servant, waine her to me.
Such maister suche man, and such mistres such mayde :
such husbandes and huswives, suche houses araide.

For flax and for hemp, for to have of her owne :
the wife must in May take good hede it be sowne.
And trimme it and keepe it to serve at a nede :
the fемble to spin and the karle for her fede.

Good husbandes abroad seketh al wel to have :
good huswives at home seketh al wel to save.
Thus having and saving in place where they meete :
make profit with pleasure suche couples to greete." †

But it is in "The points of Huswifry united to the comfort of Husbandry," of the good old poet, that we recognise the most perfect picture of the domestic economy of agricultural life in the days of Elizabeth. This material addition to the husbandry of our author appeared in 1570, and embraces a complete view of the province of the Huswife, with all her daily labours and duties, which are divided into—1st, Morning Works; 2dly, Breakfast Doings; 3dly, Dinner Matters; 4thly, Afternoon Works; 5thly, Evening Works; 6thly, Supper-Matters; and 7thly, After-Supper Matters.

From the details of this arrangement we learn, that the servants in summer rose at four, and in winter at five o'clock; that in the latter season they were called to breakfast on the appearance of the day-star, and that the huswife herself was the carver and distributer of the meat and pottage. We find, likewise, and

* English House-Wife, p. 2, 3, 4.

† Tusser, first edit. p. 14, 15.

it is the only objectionable article in the admonitions of the poet, that he recommends his dame not to scold, but to thrash heartily her maids when refractory; and he adds a circumstance rather extraordinary, but at the same time strongly commendatory of the effects of music, that

“ Such servants are oftenest painfull and good,
That sing in their labour, as birds in the wood.”

Dinner, he enjoins, should be taken at noon; should be quickly dispatched; and should exhibit plenty, but no dainties.

The bare table, he observes, will do as well, as if covered with a cloth, which is liable to be cut; and that wooden and pewter dishes and tin vessels for liquor are the best, as most secure; and then, with his accustomed piety, he advises the regular use of grace—

“ At dinner, at supper, at morning, at night,
Give thanks unto God.”

As soon as dinner is over, the servants are again set to work, and he very humanely adds,

“ To servant in seikness, see nothing ye grutch,
A thing of a trifle shall comfort him much.”

Many precepts, strictly economical, then follow, in which the huswife is directed to save her parings, drippings, and skimmings for the sake of her poultry, and for “medicine for cattle, for cart, and for shoe;” to employ the afternoon, like a good sempstress, in making and mending; to keep her maids cleanly in their persons, to call them quarterly to account, to mark and number accurately her linen, to save her feathers, to use little spice, and to make her own candle.

The business of the evening commences with preparations for supper, as soon as the hens go to roost; the hogs are then to be served, the cows milked, and as night comes on, the servants return, but none empty-handed, some bringing in wood, some logs, etc. The cattle, both without and within doors, are next to be attended to, all clothes brought into the house, and no door left unbolted, and the duties of the evening close with this injunction:

“ Thou woman, whom pity becometh the best,
Grant all that hath laboured time to take rest.”

Supper now is spread, and the scene opens with an excellent persuasive to cheerfulness and hospitality:

“ Provide for thy husband, to make him good cheer,
Make merry together, while time ye be here.
A-bed and at board, howsoever befall,
Whatever God sendeth, be merry withall.
No taunts before servants, for hindering of fame,
No jarring too loud, for avoiding of shame.”

The servants are then ordered to be courteous, and attentive to each other, especially at their meals, and directions are given for the next morning's work.

The last section, entitled “After-supper matters,” is introduced and terminated in a very moral and impressive manner. The first couplet tells us to

“ Remember those children, whose parents be poor,
Which hunger, yet dare not to crave at thy door;”

the bandog is then ordered to have the bones and the scraps; the huswife looks carefully to the fire, the candle, and the keys; the whole family retire to rest, at nine in winter, and at ten in summer, and the farmer's day closes with four lines which ought to be written in letters of gold, and which, if duly observed, would ensure a great portion of the happiness obtainable by man:

" Be lowly, not sullen, if aught go amiss;
 What wresting may lose thee, that win with a kiss.
 Both bear and forbear, now and then as ye may,
 Then wench, God a mercy! thy husband will say." *

* Mavor's Tusser, p. 247. ad p. 270.

Even this, and every other description of the duties of the Huswife, may be traced to "The Book of Husbandry," written by Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, of Norbury, in Derbyshire.

This gentleman, who was a Judge of the Common Pleas, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, is justly entitled to the appellation of "the father of English Husbandry." His work, the first edition of which was printed by Richard Pynson, in 1523, 4to., underwent not less than eleven editions during the sixteenth century, and soon excited among his countrymen a most beneficial spirit of emulation. Notwithstanding these numerous impressions, there are probably not ten complete copies left in the kingdom.

One of these is, however, now before me, included in a thick duodecimo, of which the *first article* is "Xenophon's treatise of householde," black letter, title wanting; the colophon, "Imprinted At London in fletestrete in the house of Thomas Berthelet. Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum." No date. The *second article* is "The booke of Husbandrye verye profitable and necessary for all maner of persons, newlye corrected and amended by the auctor fitzherbard, with dyvers addicions put thereunto. Anno do. 1555." black letter. Colophon, "Imprinted at London in Flete strete at the signe of the Sunne over agaynst the Conduit by John Weylande." Sixty-one leaves, exclusive of the table. The *third article* is entitled "Surveyinge," An. 1546. Colophon, "Londini in ædibus Thome Berthelet typis impress. Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum." Contains sixty leaves, black letter.

From "The booke of husbandrye," I shall extract the detail of huswifely duties, as a specimen of the work, and as a proof of the assertion at the commencement of this note.

"What workes a wyfe shoulde doe in generall.

"First in the mornynge when thou art waked and purpose to rise, lift up thy hand, and blis the and make a signe of the holy crosse. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Amen. In the name of the father y^e sonne, and the holy gost. And if thou saye a Paternoster, an Ave and a Crede, and remembre thy maker thou shalte spede much the better, and when thou art up and readye, then firste swepe thy house: dresse up the dysshe bord, and set al thynges in good order within thy house, milke y^e kie, socle thy calves, sile by thy milke, take up thy children, and aray them, and provide for thy husbande's breakefast, diner, souper, and for thy children and servauntes, and take thy parte wyth them. And to ordeyne corne and malt to the myll, to bake and brue withal when nede is. And mete it to the myl and fro the myl, and se that thou have thy mesure agayne besides the tole or els the mylner dealeth not truly wyth the, or els thy corne is not drye as it should be, thou must make butter and chese when thou may, serve thy swine both mornynge and eveninge, and give thy polen meate in the mornynge, and when tyme of yeare cometh thou must take hede how thy henne, duckes and geese do ley, and to gather up their egges and when they waxe broudy to set them there as no beastes, swyne, nor other vermyne hurt them, and thou must know that al hole foted foule wil syt a moneth and all cloven foted foule wyll syt but three wekes except a peyhen and suche other great foules as craynes, bustardes, and suche other. And when they have brought forth theyr birdes to se that they be well kepte from the gleyd, crowes fully martes and other vermyne, and in the begynnyng of March, or a lytle before is time for a wife to make her garden and to get as manye good sedes and herbes as she can, and specyally such as be good for the pot and for to eate and as ofte as nede shall require it must be weded, for els the wede wyll over grow the herbes, and also in Marche is time to sowe flaxe and hempe for I have heard olde huswyves say, that better is Marche hurdes than Apryll flaxe, the reason appereth, but howe it shoulde bee sown, weded, pulled, repealed, watred, washen, dried, beten, braked, tawed, hecheled, spon, wounden, wrapped and oven, it nedeth not for me to shewe, for they be wyse ynough, and thereof may they make shetes, bordclothes, towels, shertes, smockes, and suche other necessaryes, and therefore lette thy dystaffe be alwaye redy for a pastyme, that thou be not ydell. And undoubted a woman can not get her livinge honestly with spinning on the dystaffe, but it stoppeth a gap and must nedes be had. The bolles of flaxe when they be rypled of, must be rediled from the wedes and made dry with the sunne to get out the sedes. Now be it one maner of linsede called loken sede wyll not open by the sunne, and therefore when they be drye they must be sore brusen and broken the wyves know how, and then wynowed and kept dry til peretime cum againe. Thy femell hempe must be pulled fro the chucle hempe for this beareth no sede and thou must doe by it as thou didest by the flaxe. The chucle hempe doth beare sede; and thou must be ware that birdes eate it not as it groweth, the hempe thereof is not so good as the femell hempe, but yet it wil do good service. It may fortune sometime that thou shalte have so many thinges to do that thou shalte not wel know where is best to begyn. Then take hede which thing should be the greatest losse if it were not done and in what space it woulde be done, and then thinke what is the greatest los and ther begin. But I put case that, that thing that is of the greatest losse wyll be longe in doing, that thou might do thre or iiij other thinges in the meane whyle then loke wel if all these thinges were set togyther whiche of them were greatest losse, and yf these thynges be of greater losse, and may be al done in as shorte space as the other, then do thy many thinges fyrst. It is convenient for a husbande to have shepe of his owne for many causes, and then may his wife have part of the wooll to make her husbande and her selfe sum clothes. And at the least waye she may have the lockes of the shepe therwith to make clothes or blankets, and coverlets, or both. And if she have no wol of her owne she maye take woll to spynne of cloth makers, and by that meanes she may have a convenient living, and many tymes to do other workes. It is a wives occupacion to winow al maner of cornes, to make malte, wash and wring, to make hey, to shere corne, and in time of nede to helpe her husbande to fyll the mucke wayne or donge carte, dryve the plough, to lode hay corne and such other. Also to go or ride to the market to sell butter, chese, mylke, egges, chekens, kapons, hennes, pygges, gees, and al maner of corne. And also to bye al maner of necessary thinges belonging to a houshold, and to make a true rekening and accompt to her husband what she hath receyved and what she hath payed. And yf the husband go to the market to bye or sell as they ofte do, he then to shew his wife in lyke maner. For if one of them should use to disceive the other, he disceyveth himselfe, and he is not lyke to thryve, and therefore they must be true ether to other. I could peradventure shew the husbande of divers pointes

Frugality and domestic economy were not, however, the constant attributes of the farmer's wife in the age of which we are treating; the luxury of dress, both in England and Scotland, had already corrupted the simplicity of country-habits. Stephen Perlet, who visited Scotland in 1553, and Fines Moryson, who made a similar tour in 1598,* agree in describing the dress of the common people of both countries as nearly if not altogether the same; the picture, therefore, which Dunbar has given us of the dress of a rich farmer's wife, in Scotland, during the middle of the sixteenth century, will apply, with little fear of exaggeration, to the still wealthier dames of England. He has drawn her in a robe of fine scarlet with a white hood; a gay purse and gingling keys pendant at her side from a silken belt of silver tissue; on each finger she wore two rings, and round her waste was bound a sash of grass-green silk, richly embroidered with silver.† To this rural extravagancy in dress, Warner will bear an equal testimony; for, describing two old gossips cowering over their cottage-fire, and chatting how the world was changed in their time,

“ When we were maids (quoth one of them)
Was no such new found pride :
Then wore they shooes of ease, now of
An inch-broad, corked hye :
Black karsie stockings, worsted now,
Yea silke of youthful'st dye :

Garters of lystes, but now of silke,
Some edged deep with gold :
With costlier toyes, for courser turns,
Than us'd, perhaps of old.

Fring'd and ymbroidered petticoats
Now begge. But heard you nam'd,
Till now of late, busks, perrewigs,
Maskes, plumes of feathers fram'd,

Supporters, posters, fardingales
Above the loynes to waire,
That be she near so bombe-thin, yet
She crosse-like seems foure-squaire?

Some wives, grayheaded, shame not locks
Of youthfull borrowed haire :
Some, tiring arte, attyer their heads
With only tresses bare :

Some, (grosser pride than which, think I,
No passed age might shame)
By arte, abusing nature, heads
Of antick't hayre doe frame.

Once starching lack't the tearme, because
Was lacking once the toy,
And lack't we all these toyes and tearmes,
It were no grieve but joy.—

that the wives disceve their husbandes in, and in like maner how husbandes disceve their wives. But yf I should do so, I shuld shew mo subtil pointes of disceite then other of them knew of before. And therefore me semeth best to holde my peace, leste I shuld do as the knight of the tower did the which had many faire doghters, and of fatherlie love that he oughte to them he made a boke unto a good intent that they mighte eschewe and flee from vices and folowe vertues, in the which boke he sheweth that yf they were wooed, moved, or styrred by any man after such a maner as is there shewed that they shuld withstande it, in the which booke he shewed so manye wayes how a man shuld attaine to his purpose to bryng a woman to vice, the which waies were so naturall and the wayes to come to theyr purpose was so subtylly contrived and craftely shewed that hard it wolde be for any woman to resist or deny their desyre. And by the sayd boke hath made both the man and the woman to know mo vyces subtylty and crafte then ever they shoulde have knowen if the boke had not bene made, the which boke he named him selfe the knyghte of the tower. And thus I leave the wyves to use theyr occupations at theyr owne discrecion.”
Fol. 45, 46, 47.

* See Antiquarian Repertory, vol. i. p. 236; and Moryson's Itinerary, part iii. fol. 1617.

† The Freirs of Berwick; Pinkerton's Ancient Scottish Poems, 12mo. 2 vols. 1786. v. 2. p. 70.

Now dwels ech drossell in her glas :
 When I was yong, I wot,
 On holly-dayes (for sildome els
 Such ydell times we got)
 A tubb or paile of water cleere
 Stood us in steede of glas.*

Luxury and extravagance soon spread beyond the female circle, and the Farmer's Heir of forty pounds a year, is described by Hall, in 1598, as dissipating his property on the follies and fopperies of the day.

" Vilius, the wealthy farmer, left his heire
 Twice twenty sterling pounds to spend by yeare :—
 But whiles ten pound goes to his wife's new gowne,
 Nor little lesse can serve to suit his owne ;
 Whiles one piece pays her idle waiting-man,
 Or buys an hooode, or silver-handled fanne,
 Or hires a Friezeland trotter, halfe yard deepe,
 To drag his tumbrell through the staring Cheape ;
 Or whiles he rideth with two liveries,
 And's treble rated at the subsidies ;
 One end a kennel keeps of thriftlesse hounds ;
 What think ye rests of all my younker's pounds
 To diet him, or deal out at his doore,
 To coffer up, or stocke his wasting store?" †

In contrast to this character, who keeps a pack of hounds, and sports a couple of liveries, it will be interesting to bring forward the picture of the poor copyholder, as drawn by the same masterly pencil; the description of the wretched hovel is given in all the strength of minute reality, and the avidity of the avaricious landlord is wrought up with several strokes of humour.

" Of one bay's breadth, God wot, a silly cote,
 Whose thatched spars are furr'd with sluttish soote
 A whole inch thick, shining like black-moor's brows,
 Through smoke that downe the headlesse barrel blows.
 At his bed's feete feeden his stalled teame,
 His swine beneath, his pullen o'er the beame.
 A starved tenement, such as I guesse
 Stands straggling on the wastes of Holdernesse :
 Or such as shivers on a Peake hill side, &c.—
 Yet must he haunt his greedy landlord's hall
 With often presents at each festivall :
 With crammed capons everie new-yeare's morne,
 Or with greene cheese when his sheepe are shorne :
 Or many maunds-full of his mellow fruite,
 To make some way to win his weighty suite.—
 The smiling landlord shews a sunshine face,
 Feigning that he will grant him further grace ;
 And leers like Esop's foxe upon the crane,
 Whose neck he craves for his chirurgian." ‡

We shall close these characters, illustrative of rural manners, as they existed in the reigns of Elizabeth and James 1st, with a delineation of the plain Country Fellow or down-right Clown, from the accurate pen of Bishop Earle, who has touched this homely subject with singular point and spirit.

" A plain country fellow is one that manures his ground well, but lets himself lye fallow and untilld. He has reason enough to do his business, and not enough to be idle or melancholy. He seems to have the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, for His conversation is among beasts, and his tallons none of the shortest, only he eats not grass, because he loves not sallets. His hand guides the plough, and the plough his thoughts, and his ditch and land-mark is the very mound of his meditations. He expostulates with his oxen very understandingly, and speaks gee, and ree, better than English. His mind is not much distracted with objects, but if a good fat cow come

* Warner's Albion's England, book ix. chap. xlvii.

‡ Hall's Satires, book v. satire 1.

† Hall's Satires, book v. satire 4.

in his way, he stands dumb and astonished, and though his haste be never so great, will fix here half an hour's contemplation. His habitation is some poor thatched roof, distinguished from his barn by the loop-holes that let out smoak, which the rain had long since washed through, but for the double ceiling of bacon on the inside, which has hung there from his grandsire's time, and is yet to make rashers for posterity. His dinner is his other work, for he sweats at it as much as at his labour; he is a terrible fastner on a piece of beef, and you may hope to stave the guard off sooner. His religion is a part of his copy-hold, which he takes from his land-lord, and refers it wholly to his discretion: yet if he give him leave he is a good Christian to his powors, (that is,) comes to church in his best cloaths, and sits there with his neighbours, where he is capable only of two prayers, for rain, and fair weather. He apprehends God's blessings only in a good year, or a fat pasture, and never praises him but on *good ground*. Sunday, he esteems a day to make merry in, and thinks a bag-pipe as essential to it as evening prayer, where he walks very solemnly after service with his hand coupled behind him, and censures the dancing of his parish. His compliment with his neighbour is a good thump on the back, and his salutation commonly some blunt curse. He thinks nothing to be vices, but pride and ill husbandry, from which he will gravely dissuade the youth, and has some thrifty hob-nail proverbs to clout his discourse. He is a niggard all the week, except only market-day, where, if his corn sell well, he thinks he may be drunk with a good conscience. He is sensible of no calamity but the burning a stack of corn or the overflowing of a meadow, and thinks Noah's flood the greatest plague that ever was, not because it drowned the world, but spoiled the grass. For death he is never troubled, and if he get in but his harvest before, let it come when it will, he cares not." *

The nine characters which have now passed in brief review before us, namely, the Rural Squire; the Coxcomb; the Rural Clergyman; the Rural Pedagogue; the Farmer or substantial Yeoman; the Farmer's Wife; the Farmer's Heir; the Poor Copyholder, and the mere Ploughman or Country Boor, will, to a certain extent, point out the personal manners, condition, and mode of living of those whose inhabited the country, during the period in which Shakspeare flourished. They have been given from the experience, and, generally, in the very words of contemporary writers, and may, therefore, be considered as faithful portraits. To complete the picture, a further elucidation of the country, as drawn from its principal occurrences and events, will be the subject of the ensuing chapter, in which the references to the works of our immortal bard will be more frequent than could take place while collecting mere out-line draughts of rural character.

CHAPTER VI.

A View of Country Life during the Age of Shakspeare; its Manners and Customs.—Rural Holy-days and Festivals.

THE record of rural festivity and amusement must, as far as it is unaccompanied by any detail of riot or intemperance, be a subject of pleasing contemplation to every good and cheerful mind. Labour, the destined portion of by far the greater part of human beings, requires frequent intervals of relaxation; and the encouragement of innocent diversion at stated periods may be considered, therefore, both in a moral and political point of view, as essentially useful. The sports and amusements of our ancestors on their holydays and festivals, while they had little tendency to promote either luxury or dissipation, contributed very powerfully to preserve some of the best and most striking features of our national manners and character, and were frequently mingled with that cheerful piety which forms the most heart-felt species of devotion, where religion, mixing with the social rite, offers up the homage of a happy and contented heart.

* Earle's Microcosmography, p. 64. et seq. edit. of 1811, by Philip Bliss.

It may be necessary here to mention, that in enumerating the various ceremonial and feast days of rural life, we have purposely omitted those which are peculiarly occupied by superstitious observances, as they will with more propriety be included under a subsequent chapter, appropriated to the consideration of popular superstitions.

The ushering in of the New Year, or New Years tide, with rejoicings, presents, and good wishes, was a custom observed, during the sixteenth century, with great regularity and parade, and was as cordially celebrated in the court of the prince as in the cottage of the peasant.

To end the old year merrily and begin the new one well, and in friendship with their neighbours, were the objects which the common people had in view in the celebration of this tide or festival. New Years Eve, therefore, was spent in festivity and frolic by the men; and the young women of the village carried about, from door to door, a bowl of spiced ale, which they offered to the inhabitants of every house where they stopped, singing at the same time some rude congratulatory verses, and expecting some small present in return. This practice, however, which originated in pure kindness and benevolence, soon degenerated into a mere pecuniary traffic, for Selden, in his *Table Talk*, thus alludes to the subject, while drawing the following curious comparison: "The pope in sending relicks to princes, does as wenches do by their wassails at New Years tide.—They present you with a cup, and you must drink of a slabby stuff; but the meaning is, you must give them money ten times more than it is worth."*

It was customary also, on this eve, for the young men and women to exchange their clothes, which was termed Mumming or Disguising; and when thus dressed in each other's garments, they would go from one neighbour's cottage to another, singing, dancing, and partaking of their good cheer; a species of masquerading which, as may be imagined, was often productive of the most licentious freedoms.

On the succeeding morning, the first of the New Year, presents, called New Year's gifts, were given and received, with the mutual expression of good wishes, and particularly that of a "happy New Year." The compliment was sometimes paid at each other's doors in the form of a song; but more generally, especially in the north of England and in Scotland, the house was entered very early in the morning, by some young men and maidens selected for the purpose, who presented the spiced bowl, and hailed you with the gratulations of the season.

The custom of interchanging gifts on this day, though now nearly obsolete, was, in the days of Shakspeare, observed most scrupulously; and not merely in the country, but, as hath been just before hinted, even in the palace of the monarch. In fact the wardrobe and jewellery of Elizabeth appear to have been supported principally by these annual contributions.

As a brief summary of these presents, though given not in the country, but at court, will yet, as including almost every rank in life, from the peer to the dustman, place in a strong light the prevalence of this custom, and point out of what these gifts usually consisted in a town, and therefore, by inference, of what they must have included in the country, its introduction will not, we should hope, be considered as altogether digressive from the nature of our subject.

To Mr. Nichols, who, in his work entitled "Queen Elizabeth's Progresses," has printed, from the original rolls in vellum, some very copious lists of New Year's gifts annually presented to this popular monarch, are we indebted for the following curious enumeration.

"From all these rolls," says he, "and more of them perhaps are still existing, it appears that the greatest part, if not all the peers and peeresses of the realm, all the bishops, the chief officers of state, and several of the Queen's household servants, even down to her apothecaries, master

* Selden, under the article Pope. The *Table Talk*, though not printed until A. D. 1689, is a work illustrative of the era under our consideration.

cook, serjeant of the pastry, etc. gave New Year's gifts to Her Majesty; consisting, in general, either of a sum of money, or jewels, trinkets, wearing apparel, etc. The largest sum given by any of the temporal lords was 20*l.*; but the Archbishop of Canterbury gave 40*l.*, the Archbishop of York 30*l.*, and the other spiritual lords 20*l.* and 10*l.*; many of the temporal lords and great officers, and most of the peeresses, gave rich gowns, petticoats, smocks, kirtles, silk stockings, cypres garters, sweet-bags, doblots, mantles, some embroidered with pearles, garnets, etc. looking-glasses, fans, bracelets, caskets studded with precious stones, jewels ornamented with sparks of diamonds in various devices, and other costly trinkets. Sir Gilbert Dethick, Garter King of Arms, gave a book of the states in King William the Conqueror's time, and a book of the arms of the noblemen in Henry the Fifth's time; Absolon, the master of the Savoy, a Bible covered with cloth of gold, garnished with silver, and gilt, and two plates with the royal arms; "Petruccio Ubaldino," a book covered with vellum of Italian; Lambarde, the antiquary, his Pandecta of all the Rolls, etc. in the Tower of London. The Queen's physician presented her with a box of foreign sweetmeats; another physician with two pots, one of green ginger, the other of orange flowers; two other physicians gave each a pot of green ginger, and a pot of the rinds of lemons; her apothecaries a box of lozenges, a box of ginger candy, a box of grene ginger, a box of orange candit, a pot of conserves, a pot of wardyns condite, a box of wood with prunolyn, and two boxes of *manus Christi*; Mrs. Blanch a Parry, a little box of gold to put in cumphetts, and a little spoon of gold; Mrs. Morgan a box of cherries, and one of aberycocks; her master cook a fayre marchepayne; her serjeant of the pastry a fayre pie of quinces oringed; a box of peaches of Jenneway (Genoa); a great pie of quynses and wardyns guille; Putrino, an Italian, presented her with two pictures; Innocent Corry with a box of lutestrings; Ambrose Lupo with another box of lutestrings, and a glass of sweet water; Petro Lupo, Josepho Lupo, and Cæsar Caliardo, each, with a pair of sweet gloves; a cutler with a meat knyfe with a fan haft of bone, *a conceit in it*; Jaromy with twenty-four drinking-glasses; Jeromy Bassano two drinking-glasses; Smyth, dustman, two boltes of cambrick." *

The Queen, though she made returns in plate and other articles, took sufficient care that the balance should be in her own favour; hence, as the custom was found to be lucrative, and had indeed been practised with success by her predecessors on the throne, it was encouraged and rendered fashionable to an extent hitherto unprecedented in this kingdom. In the country, however, with the exception of the extensive households of the nobility, this interchange was conducted on the pure basis of reciprocal kindness and good will, and without any view of securing patronage or support; it was, indeed, frequently the channel through which charity delighted to exert her holy influence, and though originating in the heathen world, became sanctified by the Christian virtues.

To the rejoicings on New Year's tide succeeded, after a short interval, the observance of the Twelfth day, so called from its being the twelfth after the Nativity of our Saviour, and the day on which the Eastern Magi, guided by the star, arrived at Bethlehem to worship the infant Jesus.

This festive day, the most celebrated of the twelve for the peculiar conviviality of its rites, has been observed in this kingdom ever since the reign of Alfred, in whose days, says Collier, "a Law was made with relation to Holidays, by virtue of which the twelve days after the Nativity of our Saviour were made Festivals." †

In consequence of an idea, which seems generally to have prevailed, that the Eastern Magi were kings, this day has been frequently termed the Feast of the Three Kings; and many of the rites with which it is attended, are founded on this conception; for it was customary to elect, from the company assembled on this occasion, a king or queen, who was usually elevated to this rank by the fortuitous division of a cake containing a bean or piece of coin, and he or she to whom this symbol of distinction fell, in dividing the cake, was immediately chosen king or queen, and then forming their ministers and court from the company around, maintained their state and character until midnight.

The Twelfth Cake was almost always accompanied by the Wassail Bowl, a composition of spiced wine or ale, or mead, or metheglin, into which was thrown

* Nichols's Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. preface, p. 25—28.

† Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 163.

roasted apples, sugar, etc. The term Wassail, which in our elder poets is connected with much interesting imagery, and many curious rites, appears to have been first used in this island during the well-known interview between Vortigern and Rowena. Geoffrey of Monmouth relates, on the authority of Walter Caletanius, that this lady, the daughter of Hengist, knelt down, on the approach of the king, and presenting him with a cup of wine, exclaimed "Lord king *wæs heil*," that is, literally, "Health be to you." Vortigern being ignorant of the Saxon language was informed by an interpreter, that the purport of these words was to wish him health, and that he should reply by the expression "*drinc-heil*, or drink the health;" accordingly, on his so doing, Rowena drank, and the king receiving the cup from her hand, kissed and pledged her.* Since this period, observes the historian, the custom has prevailed in Britain of using these words whilst drinking; the person who drank to another saying *was-heil*, and he who received the cup answering *drinc-heil*.

It soon afterwards became a custom in villages, on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and Twelfth Night, for itinerant minstrels to carry to the houses of the gentry, and others, where they were generally very hospitably received, a bowl of spiced wine, which being presented with the Saxon words just mentioned, was therefore called a Wassail-bowl. A bowl or cup of this description was likewise to be found in almost every nobleman's and gentleman's house, (and frequently of massy silver), until the middle of the seventeenth century, and which was in perpetual requisition during the revels of Christmas. In "The Antiquarian Repertory, vol. i. p. 217," relates Mr. Douce, "there is an account accompanied with an engraving, of an oaken chimney-piece in a very old house at Berlen, near Snodland in Kent, on which is carved a wassail-bowl resting on the braches of an apple-tree, alluding, probably, to part of the materials of which the liquor was composed. On one side is the word *wasshēil*, and on the other *drincheile*.† This is certainly," he adds, "a very great curiosity of its kind, and at least as old as the fourteenth century. Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, in his will gave to Sir John Briddlewood a silver cup called wassail: and it appears that John Duke of Bedford, the regent, by his first will bequeathed to John Barton, his maître-d'hotel, a silver cup and cover, on which was inscribed *WASHAYL*."‡

In consequence of the Wassail-bowl being peculiar to scenes of revelry and festivity, the term wassail in time became synonymous with feasting and carousing, and has been used, therefore, by many of our poets either to imply drinking and merriment, or the place where such joviality was expected to occur. Thus Shakspeare makes Hamlet say of the king "draining his draughts of Rhenish down," that he

"Keeps wassel:" §

* Galfred. Monumeth. l. 3. c. 1. Robert of Gloucester gives us a similar account of the origin of this ceremony, and makes the same observation as to its general prevalency. The rude lines of the ancient poet have been thus beautifully paraphrased in the Antiquarian Repertory:—

" 'Health, my Lord King,' the sweet Rowena said—
 'Health,' cried the Chieftain to the Saxon maid;
 Then gaily rose, and, 'mid the concourse wide,
 Kiss'd her hale lips, and plac'd her by his side.
 At the soft scene such gentle thoughts abound,
 That healths and kisses 'mongst the guests went round:
 From this the social custom took its rise,
 We still retain, and still must keep the prize."

† "The ingenious remarker on this representation observes, that it is the figure of the old Wassel-Bowl, so much the delight of our hardy ancestors, who on the vigil of the New-Year never failed to assemble round the glowing hearth, with their chearful neighbours, and then in the spicy Wassel-Bowl (which testified the goodness of their hearts) drowned every former animosity, an example worthy modern imitation. *Wassel* was the word, *Wassel* every guest returned as he took the circling goblet from his friend, whilst song and civil mirth brought in the infant year." Brand's Observations, by Ellis, vol. i. p. 3.

‡ Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare and of Ancient Manners, vol. ii. p. 209, 210.

§ Act i. sc. 4. Reed's edit. vol. xviii. p. 64.

and in Macbeth, the heroine of that play declares that she will convince the two chamberlains of Duncan

“ With wine and wassel. ” *

In Anthony and Cleopatra also, Cæsar, advising Anthony to live more temperately, tells him to leave his

“ Lascivious wassals. ” †

And lastly, in Love's Labour's Lost, Biron, describing the character of Boyet, says,

“ He is wit's pedler: and retails his wares
At wakes, and wassels, meetings, markets, fairs. ” ‡

Ben Jonson has given us two curious personifications of the Wassail; the first in his Forest, No. 3. whilst giving an account of a rural feast in the hall of Sir Robert Wroth; he says,

“ The rout of rural folk come thronging in,
Their rudenesse then is thought no sin—
The jolly Wassail walks the often round,
And in their cups their cares are drown'd: §

and the second in “ Christmas, His Masque, as it was presented at Court 1616,” where Wassall, as one of the ten children of Christmas, is represented in the following quaint manner: Like a neat Sempster, and Songster; her Page bearing a browne bowle, drest with Ribbands, and Rosemarie before her. **

Fletcher, in his Faithful Shepherdess, has given a striking description of the festivity attendant on the Wassail bowl:

————— “ The woods, or some near town
That is a neighbour to the bordering down,
Hath drawn them thither, 'bout some lusty sport,
Or spiced Wassel-Boul, to which resort
All the young men and maids of many a cote,
Whilst the trim minstrell strikes his merry note. ” ††

The persons thus accompanying the Wassail bowl, especially those who danced and played, were called Wassailers, an appellation which it was afterwards customary to bestow on all who indulged, at any season, in intemperate mirth. Hence Milton introduces his Lady in Comus making use of the term in the following beautiful passage:

————— “ Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance, they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence,
Of such late wassailers. ” ‡‡

* Act i. sc. 7. Reed, vol. x. p. 88.

† Act v. sc. 2. Reed, vol. vii. p. 165.

** Jonson's Works, fol. vol. ii. 1640.

‡ Act i. sc. 4. Reed, vol. xvii. p. 49.

§ Epigrammes i. booke, folio 1640, p. 50.

†† Act v. sc. 1.

‡‡ Warton's Milton, 2d edit. p. 160. The Peg Tankard, a species of Wassail-Bowl introduced by the Saxons, was still in use in the days of Shakspeare. I am in possession of one, which was given to a member of my family about one hundred and fifty years ago; it is of chased silver, containing nearly two quarts, and is divided by four pegs.

This form of the wassail or wish-health bowl was introduced by Dunstan, with the view of checking the intemperance of his countrymen, which for a time it effected; but subsequently the remedy was converted into an additional stimulus to excess; “for, refining upon Dunstan's plan, each was obliged to drink precisely to a pin, whether he could sustain a quantity of liquor equal to others or not: and to that end it became a rule, that whether they exceeded, or fell short of the prescribed bumper, they were alike compelled to drink again, until they reached the next mark. In the year 1102, the priests, who had not been backward in joining and encouraging these drunken assemblies, were ordered to avoid such abominations, and wholly to discontinue the practice of “Drinking to Pegs.” Some of these Peg or Pin Cups, or Bowls, and Pin or Peg Tankards, are yet to be found in the cabinets of antiquaries; and we are to trace from their

During the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. the celebration of Twelfth Night was, equally with Christmas-Day, a festival through the land, and was observed with great ostentation and ceremony in both the Universities, at Court, at the Temple, and at Lincoln's and Gray's-Inn. Many of the Masques of Ben Jonson were written for the amusement of the royal family on this night, and Dugdale in his "*Origines Judiciales*," has given us a long and particular account of the revelry at the Temple on each of the twelve days of Christmas, in the year 1562, It appears from this document that the hospitable rites of St. Stephen's Day, St. John's Day, and Twelfth Day, were ordered to be exactly alike, and as many of them are, in their nature, perfectly rural, and were, there is every reason to suppose, observed, to a certain extent, in the halls of the country-gentry and substantial yeomanry, a short record here, of those that fall under this description, cannot be deemed inapposite.

The breakfast on Twelfth Day is directed to be of brawn, mustard, and malmsey; the dinner of two courses, to be served in the hall, and after the first course "cometh in the Master of the Game, apparelled in green velvet: and the Ranger of the Forest also, in a green suit of satten; bearing in his hand a green bow and divers arrows, with either of them a hunting horn about their necks: blowing together three blasts of venery, they pace round about the fire three times. Then the Master of the Game maketh three curtesies, kneels down, and petitions to be admitted into the service of the Lord of the Feast.

"This ceremony performed, a hunstman cometh into the hall, with a fox and a purse-net; with a cat, both bound at the end of a staff; and with them nine or ten couple of hounds, with the blowing of hunting-horns. And the fox and cat are by the hounds set upon, and killed beneath the fire. This sport finished, the Marshal (an officer so called, who with many others under different appellations, were created for the purpose of conducting the revels) placeth them in their several appointed places."

After the second course, the "antientest of the Masters of the Revels singeth a song, with the assistance of others there present;" and after some repose and revels, supper, consisting of two courses, is then served in the hall, and being ended, "the Marshall presenteth himself with drums afore him, mounted upon a scaffold, borne by four men; and goeth three times round about the harthe, crying out, aloud, 'A Lord, a Lord,' etc., then he descendeth, and goeth to dance."

"This done, the Lord of Misrule (an officer whose functions will be afterwards noticed) addresseth himself to the Banquet; which ended with some ministralsye, mirth and dancing, every man departeth to rest." *

Herrick, who was the contemporary of Shakspeare for the first twenty-five years of his life, that is, from the year 1591 to 1616, has given us the following curious and pleasing account of the ceremonies of Twelfth Night, as we may suppose them to have been observed in almost every private family:

use some common terms yet current among us. When a person is much elated, we say he is "In a merry Pin," which no doubt originally meant, he had reached that mark which had deprived him of his usual sedateness and sobriety: we talk of taking a man "A Peg lower," when we imply we shall check him in any forwardness; a saying which originated from a regulation that deprived all those of their turn of drinking, or of their Peg, who had become troublesome in their liquor: from the like rule of society came also the expression of "He is a Peg too low." *i. e.* has been restrained too far, when we say that a person is not in equal spirits with his company; while we also remark of an individual, that he is getting on "Peg by Peg," or, in other words, he is taking greater freedoms than he ought to do, which formerly meant, he was either drinking out of his turn, or, contrary to express regulation, did not confine himself to his proper portion, or peg, but drank into the next, thereby taking a double quantity." Brady's *Clavis Calendaria*, vol. ii. p. 322, 323. 1st edit.

* Nichols's *Progresses of Elizabeth*, vol. i. Entertainments at the Temple, &c. p. 22, 24.

" TWELFTH-NIGHT,

OR KING AND QUEEN.

Now, now the mirth comes
With the cake full of plums,
Where Beane's the king of the sport here ;
Beside, we must know,
The Pea also
Must revell, as Queene, in the court here.

Begin then to chuse,
This night as ye use,
Who shall for the present delight here,
Be a King by the lot,
And who shall not
Be Twelfe-day Queene for the night here.

Which knowne, let us make
Joy-sops with the cake ;
And let not a man then be seen here,

Who unurg'd will not drinke
To the base from the brink
A health to the King and the Queene here.

Next crowne the bowle full
With gentle lambs-wooll ;
Adde sugar, nutmeg and ginger,
With store of ale too ;
And thus ye must doe
To make the *wassaile* a swinger.

Give then to the King
And Queene wassailing ;
And though with ale ye be whet here ;
Yet part ye from hence,
As free from offence,
As when ye innocent met here."

Herrick's Hesperides, p. 376, 377.

The Twelfth Day was the usual termination of the festivities of Christmas with the higher ranks; but with the vulgar they were frequently prolonged until Candlemas, to which period it was thought a point of much importance to retain a portion of their Christmas cheer.

It should not be forgotten here, that Shakspeare has given the appellation of Twelfth Night to one of his best and most finished plays. No reason for this choice is discoverable in the drama itself, and from its adjunctive title of *What You Will*, it is probable, that the name was meant to be no otherwise appropriate than as designating an evening on which dramatic mirth and recreation were, by custom, peculiarly expected and always acceptable. *

It appears from a passage from Warner's *Albion's England*, that between Twelfth Day and Plough-Monday, a period was customarily fixed upon for the celebration of games in honour of the Distaff, and which was termed Rock-Day. † The notice in question is to be found in the lamentations of the Northerne-man over the decline of festivity, where he exclaims,

" Rock and plow-mondaies, gams sal gang,
With saint-feasts and kirk sights." *

That this festival was observed not only during the immediate days of Warner and Shakspeare, but for some time afterwards, we learn from a little poem by Robert Herrick, which was probably written between the years 1630 and 1640. Herrick was born in 1591, and published his collection of poems, entitled *Hes-*

* The only rite that still lingers among us on the Twelfth Day, is the election of a King and Queen, a ceremony which is now usually performed by drawing tickets, and of which Mr Brand, in his commentary on Bourne's *Antiquities of the Common People*, has extracted the subsequent detail from the *Universal Magazine* of 1774:—"I went to a friend's house in the country to partake of some of those innocent pleasures that constitute a merry Christmas; I did not return till I had been present at drawing King and Queen, and eaten a Slice of the Twelfth Cake, made by the fair hands of my good Friend's Consort. After Tea yesterday, a noble Cake was produced, and two Bowls, containing the fortunate chances for the different sexes. Our Host filled up the tickets; the whole company, except the King and Queen, were to be Ministers of State, Maids of Honour, or Ladies of the Bed-chamber.

"Our kind Host and Hostess, whether by design or accident, became King and Queen. According to Twelfth-Day Law, each party is to support their character till Midnight. After supper one called for a King's Speech, &c." *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, edit. of 1810, p. 228.

† Dr. Johnson's definition of the word *Rock* in the sense of the text, is as follows:

"(*rock*, Danish; *rocca*, Italian; *rucca*, Spanish; *spinrock*, Dutch) A distaff held in the hand, from which the wool was spun by twirling a ball below." I shall add one of his illustrations:

"A learned and a manly soul
I purpos'd her; that should with even powers,
The *rock*, the spindle, and the sheers, controul
Of destiny, and spin her own free hours. *Ben Jonson*.

‡ Chalmers's *Poets*, vol. iv. p. 564. *Albion's England*, chap. 24.

perides, in 1648. He gives us in his title the additional information that Rock, or Saint Distaff's Day, was the morrow after Twelfth Day; and he advises that it should terminate the sports of Christmas.

" SAINT DISTAFF'S OR THE MORROW AFTER TWELFTH-DAY.

Partly worke and partly play
Ye must on S. Distaff's day:
From the plough soone free your teame;
Then come home and fother them.
If the Maides a spinning goe,
Burne the flax, and fire the tow:
Scorch their plackets, but beware
That ye singe no maiden-haire.
Bring in pailles of water then,
Let the Maides bewash the men.
Give S. Distaffe all the right,
Then bid Christmas sport good night,
And next morrow, every one
To his owne vocation." *

The first Monday after Twelfth Day used to be celebrated by the ploughmen as a Holiday, being the season at which the labours of the plough commenced, and hence the day has been denominated Plough-Monday. Tusser, in his poem on husbandry, after observing that the "old guise must be kept," recommends the ploughmen on this day to the hospitality of the good huswife:

" Good huswives, whom God hath enriched ynough,
forget not the feasts, that belong to the plough:
The meaning is only to joy and be glad,
for comfort with labour, is fit to be had."

He then adds,

" Plough-Munday, next after that Twelftide is past,
bids out with the plough, the worst husband is last:
If plowman get hatchet, or whip to the skreene,
maids loveth their cocke, if no water be seene."

These lines allude to a custom prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which Mr. Hilman, in a note on the passage, has thus explained:

"After Christmas (which formerly, during the twelve days, was a time of very little work), every gentleman feasted the farmers, and every farmer their servants and task-men. Plough-Monday puts them in mind of their business. In the morning the men and maid-servants strive who shall shew their diligence in rising earliest; if the ploughman can get his whip, his plough-staff, hatchet, or any thing that he wants in the field, by the fire-side, before the maid hath got her kettle on, then the maide loseth her Shrovetide cock, and it wholly belongs to the men. Thus did our forefathers strive to allure youth to their duty, and provided them innocent mirth, as well as labour. On this Plough-Monday they have a good supper and some strong drink, that they might not go immediately out of one extreme into another." †

In the northern and north-western parts of England, the entire day was usually consumed in parading the streets, and the night was devoted to festivity. The ploughmen, apparently habited only in their shirts, but in fact with flannel jackets underneath, to keep out the cold, and these shirts decorated with rose-knots of various coloured riband, went about collecting what they called "plough-money for drink." They were accompanied by a plough, which they dragged along, and by music, and not unfrequently two of the party were dressed to personate an old woman, whom they called Bessy, and a Fool, the latter of these characters being covered with skins, with a hairy cap on his head, and the tail of some animal pendent from his back. On one of these antics was devolved the office of collecting money from the spectators by rattling a box, into which their

* Hesperides, p. 374.

† Tusser Redivivus, p. 79, 80.

contributions were dropped, while the rest of the ploughmen were engaged in performing a sword-dance, a piece of pageantry derived from our northern ancestors, and of which Olaus Magnus has left us an accurate description in his history of the Gothic nations.* It consisted, for the most part, in forming various figures with the swords, sheathed and unsheathed, commencing in slow time, and terminating in very rapid movements, which required great agility and address to be conducted with safety and effect.†

It was the opinion of Dr. Johnson that Shakspeare alluded to the sword-dance, where, in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, he makes his hero observe of Augustus, that

————— “He, at Philippi, kept
His sword even like a dancer.”‡

But Mr. Malone has remarked, with more probability, that the allusion is to the English custom of dancing with a sword worn by the side; in confirmation of which idea, he quotes a passage from *All's Well That Ends Well*, where Bertram, lamenting that he is kept from the wars, says,

“I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn,
But one to dance with.”

It has been observed in a preceding page, that, among the common people, the festivities of Christmas were frequently protracted to Candlemas-Day. This was done under the idea of doing honour to the Virgin Mary, whose purification is commemorated by the church at this period. It was generally, remarks Bourne, “a day of festivity, and more than ordinary observation among women, and is therefore called the Wives' Feast-Day.” § The term Candlemas, however, seems to have arisen from a custom among the Roman Catholics, of consecrating tapers on this day, and bearing them about lighted in procession, to which they were enjoined by an edict of Pope Sergius, A. D. 684; but on what foundation is not accurately ascertained. At the Reformation, among the rites and ceremonies which were ordered to be retained in a convocation of Henry VIII., this is one, and expressly because it was considered as symbolical of the spiritual illumination of the Gospel. ††

From Candlemas to Hallowmas, the tapers which had been lighted all the winter in Cathedral and Conventual Churches ceased to be used; and so prevalent, indeed, was the relinquishment of candles on this day in domestic life, that it has laid the foundation of one of the proverbs in the collection of Mr. Ray :

“On Candlemas-day throw Candle and Candlestick away.”

On this day likewise the Christmas greens were removed from churches and private houses. Herrick, who may be considered as the contemporary of Shakspeare, being five-and-twenty at the period of the poet's death, has given us a pleasing description of this observance; he abounds, indeed, in the history of local rites, and, though surviving beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, paints with great accuracy the manners and superstitions of the Shakspearean era. He has paid particular attention to the festival that we are describing, and enumerates the various greens and flowers appropriated to different seasons in a little poem entitled

* Olaus Magni Gent. Septent. Breviar. p. 341.

† See Brand on Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulgares*, p. 194; and Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, p. 307, edit. of 1810. Of this curious exhibition on Plough-Monday, I have often, during my boyhood, at York, been a delighted spectator, and, as far as I can now recollect, the above description appears to be an accurate detail of what took place.

‡ Act iii. sc. 9.

†† Fuller's *Church History*, p. 222.

§ Bourne's *Antiquities* apud Brand, p. 244.

" CEREMONIES FOR CANDLEMASSE EVE.

Down with the Rosemary and Bayes,
Down with the Mistleto;
Instead of Holly, now up-raise
The greener Box (for show).

The Holly hitherto did sway;
Let Box now domineere;
Untill the dancing Easter-day,
On Easter's Eve appeare.

Then youthfull Box which now hath grace,
Your houses to renew;

Grown old, surrender must his place,
Unto the crisped Yew.

When Yew is out, then Birch comes in,
And many Flowers beside;
Both of a fresh and fragrant kinne,
To honour Whitsontide.

Green Bushes then, and sweetest Bents,
With cooler Oken boughs;
Come in for comely ornaments,
To re-adorn the house." *

The usage which we have alluded to, of preserving the Christmas cheer and hospitality to Candlemas, is immediately afterwards recorded and connected with a singular superstition, in the following poems under the titles of

" CEREMONIES FOR CANDLEMASSE DAY.

Kindle the Christmas Brand, and then
Till sunne-set, let it burne;
Which quencht, then lay it up agen,
Till Christmas next returne.

Part must be kept wherewith to teend †
The Christmas Log next yeare;
And where 'tis safely kept, the fiend
Can do no mischief there.—

End now the white-loafe, and the pye,
And let all sports with Christmas dye.‡

To the exorcising power of the Christmas Brand is added, in the subsequent effusion, a most alarming denunciation against those who heedlessly leave in the Hall on Candlemas Eve, any the smallest portion of the Christmas greens.

" CEREMONY UPON CANDLEMASSE EVE.

Down with the Rosemary, and so
Down with the Baies, and Mistletoe:
Down with the Holly, Ivie, all
Wherewith ye drest the Christmas Hall:
That so the superstitious find
No one least Branch there left behind:
For look, how many leaves there be,
Neglected there, maids, trust to me,
So many goblins you shall see." §

The next important period of feasting in the country occurred at Shrove tide, which among the Roman Catholics was the time appointed for shriving or confession of sins, and was also observed as a carnival before the commencement of Lent. The former of these ceremonies was dispensed with at the Reformation; but the rites attending the latter were for a long time supported with a rival spirit of hilarity. The Monday and Tuesday succeeding Shrove Sunday, called Collop Monday and Pancake Tuesday, were peculiarly devoted to Shrovetide amuse-

* Hesperides, p. 337.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 337, 338.

§ Hesperides, p. 361. Dramatic amusements were frequent on this day, as well in the halls of the nobility in the country, as at court. With regard to their exhibition in the latter, many documents exist; for instance, in a chronological series of Queen Elizabeth's payments for plays acted before her (from the Council Registers) is the following entry:

"18th March, 1573-4. To Richard Mouncaster, (Mulcaster, the Grammarian), for two plays presented before her on Candlemas-day and Shrove-Tuesday last, 20 marks." *

* Gentleman's Magazine, vide life of Richard Mulcaster, May, June, and July, 1800.

† *Teend*, to kindle.

ment; the first having been, in papal times, the period at which they took leave of flesh, or slices of meat, termed collops in the north, which had been preserved through the winter by salting and drying, and the second was a relic of the feast preceding Lent; eggs and collops therefore on the Monday, and pancakes, as a delicacy, on the Tuesday, were duly if not religiously served up.

Tusser, in his very curious and entertaining poem on agriculture, thus notices some of the old observances at Shrovetide :—

“ At Shroftide to shroving, go thresh the fat hen,
If blindfold can kill her, then give it thy men :
Maids, fritters and pancakes ynow see ye make,
Let slut have one pancake, for company sake.”

For an explanation of the obsolete custom of “threshing the fat hen,” we are indebted to Mr. Hilman.

“ The hen,” says he, “ is hung at a fellow’s back, who has also some horse-bells about him ; the rest of the fellows are blinded, and have boughs in their hands, with which they chase this fellow and his hen about some large court or small enclosure. The fellow with his hen and bells shifting as well as he can, they follow the sound, and sometimes hit him and his hen ; at other times, if he can get behind one of them, they thresh one another well favour’dly ; but the jest is, the maids are to blind the fellows, which they do with their aprons, and the cunning baggages will endear their sweet-hearts with a peeping hole, whilst the others look out as sharp to hinder it. After this the hen is boil’d with bacon, and store of pancakes and fritters are made. She that is noted for lying in bed long, or any other miscarriage, hath the first pancake presented to her, which most commonly falls to the dogs’ share at last, for no one will own it their due.” Mr. Hilman concludes his comment on the text with a singular remark ; “ the loss of the above laudable custom, is one of the benefits we have got by smoaking tobacco.” *

Shakspeare has twice noticed this season of feasting and amusement ; first, in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, where he makes the Clown tell the Countess (among a string of other similes), that his answer is “ as fit as a pancake for Shrove-Tuesday ;” † and in the *Second Part of King Henry IV*, he has introduced Silence singing the following song :—

“ Be merry, be merry, my wife’s as all ; ‡
For women are shrews, both short and tall :
’Tis merry in hall, when beards wag all,
And welcome merry shrovetide.
Be merry, be merry, &c.”

The third line of this song appears to have been proverbial, and of considerable antiquity ; for Adam Davie, who flourished about 1312, has the same imagery with the same rhyme, in his “ *Life of Alexander* :”

“ Merry swithe it is in halle,
When the berdes waveth alle.” §

* Hilman’s *Tusser*, p. 80. Mr Hilman seems to have had as great an aversion to tobacco as King James ; for, in another part of his notes, he observes, that “ Suffolk and Essex were the counties wherein our author was a farmer, and no where are better dairies for butter, and neater housewives than there, if too many of them at present do not smoke tobacco.” p. 49.

† Reed’s *Shakspeare*, vol. viii. p. 272. 273. Act ii. sc. 2. Warner has also noticed this culinary article as appropriated to Shrove-Tuesday in his *Albion’s England*, chapter xxiv., where, enumerating the feasts and holidays of his time, he says, they had

“ At fasts-eve pan-puffes.”—*Chalmers’s Poets*, vol. iv. p. 564.

Shrove or Pancake Tuesday, is still called, in the North, *Fastens*, or *Fasterns E’en*, as preceding Ash-Wednesday, the first day of Lent ; and the turning of these cakes in the pan is yet observed as a feat of dexterity and skill.

Of the pancake-bell which used to be rung on Shrove-Tuesday, Taylor, the Water Poet, has given us the following most singular account :—“ Shrove-Tuesday, at whose entrance in the morning all the whole kingdom is unquiet, but by that time the clocke strikes eleven, which (by the help of a knavish sexton) is commonly before nine, then there is a bell rung, cal’d pancake-bell, the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetful either of manners or humanitie.” See his *Works*, folio, 1630. p. 115.

‡ — *my wife’s as all* ;] i. e. as all women are. Farmer.

§ Warton’s *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 225. note (p).

And the subsequent passage, quoted by Mr. Reed from a writer contemporary with Shakspeare, proves, that it was a common burden or under song in the halls of our gentry at that period:—"which done, grace said, and the table taken up, the plate presently conveyed into the pantrie, the hall summons this consort of companions (upon payne to dyne with Duke Humphrie, or to kisse the hare's foot), to appear at the first call: where a song is to be sung, the under song or holding whereof is, 'It is merrie in haul where beards wag all.'" The Serving-man's Comfort, 1698, sign. C. *

The evening of Shrove-Tuesday was usually appropriated, as well in the country as in town, to the exhibition of dramatic pieces. Not only at Court, where Jonson was occasionally employed to write Masques on this night, † but at both the Universities, in the provincial schools, and in the halls of the gentry and nobility, were these the amusements of Shrovetide, during the days of Elizabeth and James. Warton, speaking of these ephemeral plays, adds, in a note, "I have seen an anonymous comedy, 'Apollo Shroving,' composed by the Master of Hadleigh-school, in Suffolk, ‡ and acted by his scholars, on Shrove-Tuesday, Feb. 7, 1626, printed 1627, 8vo. published, as it seems, by E. W. Shrove-Tuesday, as the day immediately preceding Lent, was always a day of extraordinary sport and feasting.—"Some of these festivities," he proceeds to say, "still remain in our universities. In the 'Percy Houshold Book,' 1512, it appears, that the clergy and officers of Lord Percy's chapel performed a play before his lordship upon Shrowftewesday at night." Pag. 345. §

The cruel custom of Cock-throwing, which until lately was a diversion peculiar to this day, seems to have originated from the barbarous, yet less savage, amusement of Cock-fighting. "Every yeare on Shrove-Tuesday," says Fitzstephen, who wrote in the reign of Henry II., "the schoole-boyes doe bring cockes of the game to their master, and all the forenoone they delight themselves in Cock-fighting." ** At what period this degenerated into Cock-throwing cannot now be ascertained; Chaucer seems to allude to it in his "Nonnes Priests' Tale," where the Cock revenges himself on the Priest's son, because he

—————"gave hym a knocke
Upon his legges, when he was yonge and nice;

and that it was common in the sixteenth century, we have the testimony of Sir Thomas More, who, describing the state of childhood, speaks of his skill in casting a cok-stele, that is, a stick or cudgel to throw at a cock. ††

The first effective blow directed against this infamous sport, was given by the moral pencil of Hogarth, who in one of his prints called "The Four Stages of Cruelty," has represented, among other puerile diversions, a group of boys throwing at a Cock, and, as Trusler remarks, "beating the harmless feathered animal to jelly." ‡‡ The benevolent satire of this great artist gradually produced the necessary reform, and for some time past, the magistrates have so

* Reed's Shakspeare, vol. xii. p. 235.

† See his Masque on the Shrove-Tuesday at night 1608, and Chloridia, a Masque, at Shrovetide, 1630.

‡ The author of "Apollo Shroving" was William Hawkins, who likewise published "Corolla varia contexta per Guil. Haukinum scholarcham Hadleianum in agro Suffolcienci. Cantabr. ap. Tho. Buck." 12mo. 1634.

§ It may be observed, that Shrove-Tuesday was considered by the apprentices as their peculiar holiday; and it appears that in the days of Shakspeare, they claimed a right of punishing, at this season, women of ill-fame. To these customs Dekker and Sir Thomas Overbury allude, when the former says: "They presently (like Prentises upon Shrove-Tuesday) take the lawe into their owne handes and do what they list." Seven Deadly Sinnes of London, 4to. p. 35. 1606. And when the latter, in his Characters, speaking of a bawd, remarks: "Nothing daunts her so much as the approach of Shrove-Tuesday;" and describing a "roaring boy," adds, "he is a supervisor of brothels, and in them is a more unlawful reformer of vice than prentices on Shrove-Tuesday."

§ History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 387.

†† Vide Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 250

** Stow's Survey of London, edit. of 1618, p. 142.

‡‡ Vide Hogarth Moralized p. 134.

generally interdicted the practice, that the pastime may happily be considered as extinct. *

Eastertide, or the week succeeding Easter-Sunday, afforded another opportunity for rejoicing, and was formerly a season of great festivity. Not only, as bound by every tie of gratitude to do, did man rejoice on this occasion, but it was the belief of the vulgar that the sun himself partook of the exhilaration, and regularly danced on Easter-Day. To see this glorious spectacle, therefore, it was customary for the common people to rise before the sun on Easter-morning, and though, as we may conclude, they were constantly disappointed, yet might the habit occasionally lead to serious thought and useful contemplation; metaphorically considered, indeed, the idea may be termed both just and beautiful, "for as the earth and her valleys standing thick with corn, are said 'to laugh and sing'; so, on account of the Resurrection, the heavens and the sun may be said to dance for joy; or, as the Psalmist words it, the 'heavens may rejoice and the earth may be glad.'†

The great amusement of the Easter-holidays consisted in playing at hand-ball, a game at which, say the ritualists Belithus and Durandus, bishops and archbishops used, upon the Continent at this period, to recreate themselves with their inferior clergy;‡ nor was it uncommon for corporate bodies on this occasion in England to amuse themselves in a similar way with their burgesses and young people; anciently this was the custom, says Mr. Brand, at Newcastle, at the feasts of Easter and Whitsuntide, when the mayor, aldermen, and sheriff, accompanied by great numbers of the burgesses, used to go yearly at these seasons to the Forth, or little mall of the town, with the mace, sword, and cap of maintenance carried before them, and not only countenance, but frequently join in the diversions of hand-ball, dancing, etc.§

The constant prize at hand-ball, during Easter, was a tansy-cake, supposed to

* "In some places," says Mr. Strutt, "it was a common practice to put the cock into an earthen vessel made for the purpose, and to place him in such a position that his head and tail might be exposed to view; the vessel, with the bird in it, was then suspended across the street, about twelve or fourteen feet from the ground, to be thrown at by such as chose to make trial of their skill; two-pence was paid for four throws, and he who broke the pot, and delivered the cock from his confinement, had him for a reward. At North-Walsham, in Norfolk, about forty years ago, some wags put an owl into one of these vessels; and having procured the head and tail of a dead cock, they placed him in the same position as if they had appertained to a living one; the deception was successful; and at last, a labouring man belonging to the town, after several fruitless attempts, broke the pot, but missed his prize; for the owl being set at liberty, instantly flew away, to his great astonishment, and left him nothing more than the head and tail of the dead bird with the potsherds, for his money and his trouble; this ridiculous adventure exposed him to the continual laughter of the town's people, and obliged him to quit the place, to which I am told he returned no more." *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 251.

"For many years," observes Mr. Brady, "our public diaries, and monthly publications, took infinite pains to impress upon the minds of the populace a just abhorrence of such barbarities (cock-fighting and cock-throwing); and, by way of strengthening their arguments, they failed not to detail in the most pathetic terms the following fact, which for the interest it contains is here transcribed, from the *Obituary of the Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1789. Died, April 4th, at Tottenham, John Ardesoif, esquire, a young man of large fortune, and in the splendour of his horses and carriages, rivalled by few country-gentlemen. His table was that of hospitality, where it may be said he sacrificed too much to conviviality. Mr. Ardesoif was very fond of cock-fighting, and had a favourite cock upon which he had won many profitable matches. The last bet he laid upon this cock he lost, which so enraged him, that he had the bird tied to a spit, and roasted alive before a large fire. The screams of the miserable animal were so affecting, that some gentlemen who were present attempted to interfere, which so enraged Mr. Ardesoif, that he seized a poker, and with the most furious vehemence declared, that he would kill the first man who interfered: but in the midst of his passionate asseverations, he fell down dead upon the spot." *Clavis Calendaria*, 1st edit. vol. i. p. 200, 201.

† Bourne's *Antiquities* apud Brand, p. 268.

‡ Bourne's *Antiquities* apud Brand, p. 277. "Why they should play at Hand Ball at this time," observes Mr Bourne, "rather than any other game, I have not been able to find out, but I suppose it will readily be granted, that this custom of so playing, was the original of our present recreations and diversions on Easter Holy Days," p. 277.

§ Brand on Bourne, p. 280. note. The morris dance, of which such frequent mention is made in our old poets, was frequently performed at Easter; but, as we shall have occasion to notice this amusement, at some length, under the article "May-Day," we shall here barely notice that Warner has recorded it as an Easter diversion in the following line:

"At Paske begun our morrise: and ere Penticost our May."

Albion's England, Chap. xxiv.

be allusive to the bitter herbs used by the Jews on this festival. Selden, the contemporary of Shakspeare, speaking of our chief holidays, remarks, that

“ Our meats and sport have much of them relation to Church-works. The coffin of our Christmas Pies, in shape long, is in imitation of the Cratch : * our chusing Kings and Queens on Twelfth Night, hath reference to the three kings. So likewise our eating of fritters, whipping of tops, *roasting* of herrings, Jack of Lents, etc, they are all in imitation of Church-Works, emblems of martyrdom. Our Tansies at Easter have reference to the bitter Herbs ; though at the same time ’twas always the fashion for a man to have a Gammon of Bacon, to shew himself to be no Jew.” †

Fuller has noticed this Easter game under his Cheshire, where, explaining the origin of the proverb “ When the daughter is stolen shut Pepper Gate,” he says, “ The mayor of the city had his daughter, as she was playing at ball with other maidens in Pepper-street, stolen away by a young man through the same gate, whereupon he caused it to be shut up.” ‡

Another custom which prevailed in this country, during the sixteenth century, at Easter, and is still kept up in some parts of the north, was that of presenting children with eggs stained with various colours in boiling, termed Paste or more properly Pasche Eggs, which the young people considered in the light of fairings. This observance appears to have arisen from a superstition, prevalent among the Roman Catholics, that eggs were an emblem of the resurrection, and, indeed, in the Ritual of Pope Paul the Fifth, which was composed for the use of England, Ireland, and Scotland, there is a prayer for the consecration of eggs, in which the faithful servants of the Lord are directed to eat this his creature of eggs on account of the resurrection. On this custom Mr. Brand has well observed, that “ the ancient Egyptians, if the resurrection of the body had been a tenet of their faith, would perhaps have thought an Egg no improper hieroglyphical representation of it. The exclusion of a living creature by incubation after the vital principle has lain a long while dormant or extinct, is a process so truly marvellous, that if it could be disbelieved, would be thought by some a thing as incredible, as that the Author of Life should be able to re-animate the dead.” § So prevalent indeed was this custom of egg-giving at Easter, that it forms the basis of an old English proverb, which, in the collection of Mr. Ray, runs thus :

“ I’ll warrant you for an egg at Easter.” **

A popular holiday, called Hoke-Day, or Hock-Day, which used to be celebrated with much festivity in Shakspeare’s native county, was usually observed on the Tuesday following the second Sunday after Easter-day. Its origin is doubtful, some antiquaries supposing it was commemorative of the massacre of the Danes in the reign of Ethelred the Unready, which took place on the 13th of November, 1002; and others that it was meant to perpetuate the deliverance of the English from the tyrannical government of the Danes, by the death of Hardicanute on Tuesday the 8th of June, 1041. At Coventry in Warwickshire, however, it was celebrated in memory of the former event, though the commemoration was held on a day wide apart from that on which the catastrophe occurred, a circumstance which originated in an ordinance of Ethelred himself, who transferred the sports of this day to the Monday and

* Rack or Manger.

‡ Fuller’s Worthies, p. 188.

† Selden’s Table-Talk, art. Christmas.

§ Bourne apud Brand, p. 346.

** The following whimsical custom, relates Mr Brand, “ is still retained at the city of Durham on these holidays. On one day the men take off the women’s shoes, which are only to be redeem’d by a present ; on another day the women take off the men’s in like manner.” Bourne apud Brand, p. 282.

Stow also records, that in the week before Easter there were “ great shewes made, for the fetching in of a twisted tree, or With, as they tearmed it, out of the Woods into the King’s house. and the like into every man’s house of Honor or Worship,” p. 150. ; but whether this was general throughout the kingdom, is not mentioned.

Tuesday in the third week after Easter. John Rouse, or Ross, the Warwickshire historian, says, that this day was distinguished by various sports, in which the people, divided into parties, used to draw each other by ropes; * a species of diversion of which Spelman has given us a more intelligible account, by telling us that it "consisted in the men and women binding each other, and especially the women the men," and that the day, in consequence of this pastime, was called Binding-Tuesday. †

The term hock, by which this day is designated, is thus accounted for by Henry of Huntingdon.

"The secret letters of Ethelred, directed to all parts of his kingdom from this city (Winchester), ordered that all the Danes indiscriminately should be put to death; and this was executed, as we learn from the chronicle of Wallingford, with circumstances of the greatest cruelty, even upon women and children, in many parts: but in other places, it seems that the English, instead of killing their guests, satisfied themselves with what was called hock-shining, or houghing them, by cutting their ham-strings, so as to render them incapable of serving in war. Hence the sports which were afterwards instituted in our city, and from thence propagated through the whole kingdom, obtained the name of Hocktide merriments."

It appears from the following passage in Laneham's Account of Queen Elizabeth's Entertainment at Kenelworth Castle, A. D. 1575, that the citizens of Coventry had lately been compelled to give up their annual amusements on Hock-Tuesday, and took the opportunity of the queen's visit to the Earl of Leicester to petition her for a renewal of the same.

"Hereto followed," says Laneham, "as good a sport (methought), presented in an historical cue, by certain goodhearted men of Coventry, my Lord's neighbours there; who understanding among them the thing that could not be hidden from any, how careful and studious his Honour was that by all pleasant recreations her Highness might best find herself welcome, and be made gladsome and merry (the groundwork indeed and foundation of his Lordship's mirth and gladness of us all), made petition that they mought renew now their old storial shew: Of argument how the Danes, whylome here in a troublous season were for quietness borne withal and suffered in peace; that anon, by outrage and importable insolency, abusing both Ethelred the King, then, and all Estates every where beside; at the grievous complaint and counsel of Huna the King's chieftain in wars on a Saint Brice's night, A.D. 1012 (as the book says, that falleth yearly on the thirteenth of November) were all dispatched, and the realm rid. And for because the matter mentioneth how valiantly our English women for love of their country behaved themselves, expressed in actions and rymes after their manner, they thought it mought move some mirth to her Majesty the rather. The thing, said they, is grounded on story, and for pastime wont to be played in our city yearly; without ill example of manners, papistry, or any superstition, and else did so occupy the heads of a number, that likely enough would have had worse meditations; had an ancient beginning and a long continuance; till now of late laid down, they knew no cause why, unless it were by the zeal of certain their preachers, men very commendable for their behaviour and learning, and sweet in their sermons, but somewhat too sour in preaching away their pastime: Wished therefore, that as they should continue their good doctrine in pulpit, so, for matters of policy and governance of the city, they would permit them to the Mayor and Magistrates; and said, by my faith, Master Martyn, they would make their humble petition unto her Highness, that they might have their Plays up again." ‡

As it is subsequently stated that their play was very graciously received by the queen, who commanded it to be represented again on the following Tuesday, and gave the performers two bucks, and five marks in money, we must suppose, that their petition was not rejected, and that they were allowed to renew yearly at Coventry, their favourite diversions on Hock-Tuesday. The observance of this day, indeed, was still partially retained in the time of Spelman, who died A. D. 1641, § and even Plott, who lived until 1696, mentions it then as not to-

* Vide Ross, as published by Hearne, p. 105.

† Spelman's Glossary, under the title Hock-day.

‡ Nichols's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. Laneham's Letter, p. 32-34.

§ That Hock-tide was generally observed in the days of Shakspeare, is evident from the following passage in Withers's "Abuses Stript and Whipt." Svo. London. 1618.

"Who think (forsooth) because that once a yeare
They can afford the poore some slender cheere,

tally discontinued; but the eighteenth century, we believe, never witnessed its celebration.

We have now reached that period of the year which was formerly dedicated to one of the most splendid and pleasing of our festal rites. The observance of May-Day was a custom which, until the close of the reign of James the First, alike attracted the attention of the royal and the noble, as of the vulgar class. Henry the Eighth, Elizabeth, and James patronized and partook of its ceremonies; and, during this extended era, there was scarcely a village in the kingdom but what had a May-pole, with its appropriate games and dances.

The origin of these festivities has been attributed to three different sources, Classic, Celtic, and Gothic. The first appears to us to establish the best claim to the parentage of our May-day rites, as a relique of the Roman *Floralia*, which were celebrated on the last four days of April, and on the first of May, in honour of the goddess Flora, and were accompanied with dancing, music, the wearing of garlands, strewing of flowers, etc. The Beltein or rural sacrifice of the Highlanders on this day, as described by Mr. Pennant and Dr. Jamieson,* seems to have arisen from a different motive, and to have been instituted for the purpose of propitiating the various noxious animals which might injure or destroy their flocks and herds. The Gothic anniversary on May-day makes a nearer approach to the general purpose of the *Floralia*, and was intended as a thanksgiving to the sun, if not for the return of flowers, fruit, and grain, yet for the introduction of a better season for fishing and hunting.†

The modes of conducting the ceremonies and rejoicings on May-day, may be best drawn from the writers of the Elizabethan period, in which this festival appears to have maintained a very high degree of celebrity, though not accompanied with that splendour of exhibition which took place at an earlier period in the reign of Henry the Eighth. It may be traced, indeed, from the era of Chaucer, who, in the conclusion of his *Court of Love*, has described the Feast of May, when

“ ——— Forth goth all the court both most and lest,
To fetch the floures fresh, and braunch and blome—
And namely hauthorn brought both page and grome
And than rejoysen in their great delite:
Eke ech at other throw the floures bright,
The primerose, the violete, and the gold,
With fresh garlants party blew and white.”‡

And, it should be observed, that this, the simplest mode of celebrating May-day, was as much in vogue, in the days of Shakspeare, as the more complex one, accompanied by the morris-dance, and the games of Robin Hood. The following descriptions, by Bourne and Borlase, manifestly allude to the costume of this age, and to the simpler mode of commemorating the 1st of May:

“ On the Calends, or the 1st day of May,” says the former, “ commonly called May-day, the juvenile part of both sexes were wont to rise a little after midnight, and walk to some neighbouring wood, accompany’d with music, and the blowing of horns, where they break down branches from the trees, and adorn them with nosegays and crowns of flowers. When this is done they return with their booty homewards, about the rising of the sun, and make their doors and windows to triumph in the flowery spoil. The after part of the day is chiefly spent in dancing round a tall

Observe their country feasts, or common doles,
And entertaine their Christmass Wassaille Boles,
Or els because that, for the Church’s good,
They in defence of Hocktide custome stood:
A Whitsun-ale, or some such goodly motion,
The better to procure young men’s devotion:
What will they do, I say, that think to please
Their mighty God with such fond things as these?
Sure, very ill.—P. 232.

* Vide Pennant’s *Scotland*, p. 91.; and Jamieson’s *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*.

† Olaus Magnus de *Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, lib. xv. c. 8.

‡ Chalmers’s *English Poets*, vol. i. p. 378.

poll, which is called a May Poll; which being placed in a convenient part of the village, stands there, as it were consecrated to the Goddess of Flowers, without the least violence offered it, in the whole circle of the year.”* “An antient custom,” says the latter, “still retained by the Cornish, is that of decking their doors and porches on the first of May with green sycamore and hawthorn boughs, and of planting trees, or rather stumps of trees, before their houses: and on May-eve, they from towns make excursions into the country, and having cut down a tall elm, brought it into town, fitted a straight and taper pole to the end of it, and painted the same, erect it in the most public places, and on holidays and festivals adorn it with flower garlands, or insigns and streamers.”†

Now both these passages are little more than a less extended account of what Philip Stubbes was a witness of, and described, in the year 1595, in his puritanical work, entitled “The Anatomie of Abuses.”

“Against Maie-day,” relates this vehement declaimer, “every parish, towne, or village, assemble themselves, both men, women, and children; and either all together, or dividing themselves into companies, they goe some to the woods and groves, some to the hills and mountaines, some to one place, some to another, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes, and in the morning they return, bringing with them birche boughes and branches of trees to deck their assemblies withal. But their chiefest jewel they bring from thence is the maie-poale, which they bring home with great veneration, as thus—they have twentie or fortie yoake of oxen, every oxe having a sweete nose-gaie of flowers tied to the tip of his hornes, and these oxen drawe home the maie-poale, their stinking idol rather, which they covered all over with flowers and hearbes, bound round with strings from the top to the bottome, and sometimes it was painted with variable colours, having two or three hundred men, women, and children following it with great devotion. And thus equipp’d it was reared with handkerchiefes and flagges streaming on the top, they strawe the ground round about it, they bind green boughs about it, they set up summer halles, bowers, and arbours, hard by it, and then fall they to banquetting and feasting, to leaping and dauncing about it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idolls.—I have heard it crediblie reported,” he sarcastically adds, “by men of great gravity, credite, and reputation, that of fourtie, three score, or an hundred maides going to the wood, there have scarcely the third part of them returned home againe as they went.”‡

Browne also has given a similar description of the May-day rites in his *Britannia’s Pastorals* :—

“As I have seene the Lady of the May
Set in an arbour ———
Built by the May-pole, where the jocund swaines
Dance with the maidens to the bagpipe’s straines,
When envious night commands them to be gone,
Call for the merry yongsters one by one,
And for their well performance some disposes,
To this a garland interwove with roses;
To that a carved hooke, or well-wrought scrip,
Gracing another with her cherry lip:
To one her garter, to another then
A handkerchiefe cast o’re and o’re agen;
And none returneth empty, that hath spent
His paynes to fill their rural merriment.”§

The custom of rising early on a May-morning to enjoy the season, and honour the day, is thus noticed by Stow :—“In the month of May,” he says, “namely, on May-day in the morning, every man, except impediment, would walke into the sweete meddowes and green woods, there to rejoyce their spirits, with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmony of birds, praying God in their kind;”** and Shakspeare has repeated references to the same observance; in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Lysander tells Hermia,

* Bourne’s *Antiquitates Vulgares* apud Brand, p. 283.

† Vide Borlase’s *Natural History of Cornwall*, etc.

‡ Stubbes’s *Anatomie of Abuses*, p. 109, edit. 1595, 4to.

§ Book ii. Song 4. Chalmers’s *Poets*, vol. vi. p. 296.—It was no uncommon thing also for the milkmaids to join the procession to the May-pole on this day, leading a cow decorated with ribands of various colours, intermingled with knots of flowers, and wreathes of oaken leaves, and with the horn of the animal gilt.

** Stow’s *Survey of London*, p. 150. 1618.

—— “I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May;”

and again, in the same play, Theseus says,—

“No doubt they rose up early, to observe
The rite of May.”†

• So generally prevalent was this habit of early rising on May-day, that Shakspeare makes one of his inferior characters in King Henry the Eighth exclaim,—

“Pray, sir, be patient; ’tis as much impossible
(Unless we sweep them from the door with cannons)
To scatter them, as ’tis to make them sleep
On May-day morning; which will never be.”‡

Herrick, the minute describer of the customs and superstitions of his times, which were those of Shakspeare, and the immediately succeeding period, has a poem called “Corinna’s Going a Maying,” which includes most of the circumstances hitherto mentioned; he thus addresses his mistress:—

“Get up —— and see
The dew bespangling herbe and tree:
Each flower has wept, and bow’d toward the east,
Above an houre since;—it is sin,
Nay profanation to keep in;
When as a thousand virgins on this day,
Spring sooner than the lark, to fetch in May!
Come, my Corinna, come; and comming marke
How each field turns a street, each street a parke
Made green, and trimm’d with trees; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough,
Or branch: each porch, each doore, ere this,
An arke, a tabernacle is
Made up of white-thorn neatly enterwove.—

There’s not a budding boy, or girle, this day
But is got up, and gone to bring in May:
A deale of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
Some have dispatht their cakes and creame,
Before that we have left to dreame:
And some have wept, and woo’d, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth:
Many a green gown has been given;
Many a kisse, both odde and even:
Many a glance too has been sent
From out the eye, Love’s firmament:
Many a jest told of the keyes betraying
This night, and locks pickt, ye w’are not a Maying!”§

With this, the simplest mode of celebrating the rites of May-day, was frequently united, in the days of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, a groupe of Morris Dancers, consisting of several characters, which were often varied both in number, appellation, and dress. The Morris Dance appears have been introduced

* Act. i. sc. 1.

† Act iv. sc. 1. The rite of this month,” observes Mr Steevens, “was once so universally observed, that even authors thought their works would obtain a more favourable reception, if published on May-day. The following is a title-page to a metrical performance by a once celebrated poet, Thomas Churchyard:

‘Come bring in *Maye* with me,
My *Maye* is fresh and greene;
A subjectes harte, an humble mind,
To serve a maiden Queene.

‘A discourse of rebellion, drawne forth for to warne the wanton wittes how to kepe their heads on their shoulders.

‘Imprinted at London, in Flete-streat by William Griffith, Anno Domini 1570. The *first of Maye*.’”

‡ Act. v. sc. 3.

§ Herrick’s Hesperides, p. 74, 75.

into this kingdom about the reign of Edward the Fourth, and is, without doubt, derived from the Morisco, a dance peculiar to the Moors, and generally termed the Spanish Morisco, from its notoriety in Spain, during the dynasty of that people in the peninsula. The Morris Dance in this country, when performed on a May-day, and not connected with the Games of Robin Hood, usually consisted of the Lady of the May, the Fool, or domestic buffoon of the 15th and 16th centuries, a Piper, and two, four, or more Morris Dancers. The dress of these last personages, who designated the amusement, was of a very peculiar kind; they had their faces blackened to resemble the native Moors, and "in the reign of Henry the Eighth," says Mr. Douce, "they were dressed in gilt leather and silver paper, and sometimes in coats of white spangled fustian. They had purses at their girdles, and garters to which bells were attached;"* but according to Stubbes, who wrote in 1595, the costume had been altered, for he tells us that they were clothed in "greene, yellow, or some other light wanton collour. And as though that were not gawdy ynough," he continues, they bedeeke themselves with scarffes, ribbons, and laces hanged all over with golde ringes, precious stones, and other jewels; this done, they tie about either legge twentie or fourtie belles, with rich handkerchiefe in their handes, and sometimes laide a crosse over their shoulders and neckes, borrowed for the most part of their pretie Mopsies and loving Bessies for bussing them in the darke."† Feathers, too, were usually worn in their hats, and they had occasionally bells fixed on their arms or wrists, as well as on their legs. That these jingling ornaments were characteristic of, and derived from, the genuine Moorish Dance, appears from a plate copied by Mr. Douce from the habits of various nations, published by Hans Weigel at Nuremberg, in 1577, and which represents the figure of an African lady of the kingdom of Fez in the act of dancing, with bells at her feet.‡

It was the business of these motley figures to dance round the May-pole, which was painted of various colours; thus in Mr Tollett's painted glass window, at Betley in Staffordshire, which represents an English May-game and morris-dance, the May-pole is stained yellow and black, in spiral lines; § and Shakspeare, in allusion to this custom, makes Hermia tell Helena, whilst ridiculing the tallness of her form, that she is a "painted May-pole;"** so Stubbes, likewise, in a passage previously quoted, says, that the May-pole was "painted with variable colours."

That the morris-dance was an almost constant attendant on the May-day festivities, may be drawn from our usual authority, the works of Shakspeare; for, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, the Clown affirms, that his answer will serve all questions

"As fit as a morris for May-day."††

But, about the commencement of the sixteenth century, or somewhat sooner, probably towards the middle of the fifteenth century, a very material addition was made to the celebration of the rites of May-day, by the introduction of the characters of Robin Hood and some of his associates. This was done with a view towards the encouragement of archery, and the custom was continued even beyond the close of the reign of James I. It is true, that the May-games in their rudest form, the mere dance of lads and lasses round a May-pole, or the simple morris with the Lady of the May, were occasionally seen during the days of Elizabeth; but the general exhibition was the more complicated ceremony which we are about to describe.

The personages who now became the chief performers in the morris-dance,

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 473.

† *Ibid.* p. 474.

** *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2.

†† Act ii. sc. 2.

† *Anatomie of Abuses*, p. 107.

§ Vide Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xi. p. 440.

were four of the most popular outlaws of Sherwood forest ; that Robin Hood, of whom Drayton says,—

“ In this our spacious isle, I think there is not one,
But he hath heard some talk of him and little John ;—
Of Tuck the merry friar, which many a sermon made
In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws and their trade ;—
Of Robin’s mistress dear, his loved Marian,
—— ——— which wheresoe’er she came,
Was sovereign of the woods, chief lady of the game :
Her clothes tuck’d to the knee, and dainty braided hair,
With bow and quiver arm’d ;” *

characters which Warner, the contemporary of Drayton and Shakspeare, has exclusively recorded as celebrating the rites of May ; for, speaking of the periods of some of our festivals, and remarking that “ ere Pentecost begun our May,” he adds,

“ Tho’ (*then*) Robin Hood, liell John, frier Tucke,
And Marian, deftly play,
And lord and ladie gang till kirke
With lads and lasses gay :

Fra masse and een sang sa gud cheere
And glee on ery greene.” †

These four characters, therefore, Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck, and Maid Marian, although no constituent parts of the original English morris, became at length so blended with it, especially on the festival of May-day, that until the practice of archery was nearly laid aside, they continued to be the most essential part of the pageantry.

In consequence of this arrangement, “ the old Robin Hood of England,” as Shakspeare calls him, ‡ was created the King or Lord of the May, and sometimes carried in his hand, during the May-game, a painted standard. § It was no uncommon circumstance, likewise, for metrical interludes, of a comic species, and founded on the achievements of this outlaw, to be performed after the morris, on the May-pole green. In Garrick’s Collection of Old Plays, occurs one, entitled “ A mery Geste of Robyn Hoode, and of hys Lyfe, wyth a newe Playe for to be played in Maye-Games, very pleasaunte and full of pastyme ;” it is printed at London, in the black letter, for William Copland, and has figures in the title page of Robin Hood and Lytel John. ** Shakspeare appears to allude to these interludes when he represents Fabian, in the Twelfth Night, exclaiming on the approach of Sir Andrew Ague-Cheek with his challenge, “ More matter for May-morning.”

Upon this introduction of Robin Hood and his companions into the celebration of May-day, his paramour Maid Marian assumed the office of the former Queen of May. This far-famed lady has, according to Mr. Ritson, no part in the original and more authentic history of Robin Hood ; but seems to have been first brought forward when the story of this hero became dramatised, which was at a very early period in this country ; and Mr. Douce is of opinion that the name, which is a stranger to English history, has been taken from “ a pretty French pastoral drama of the eleventh or twelfth century, entitled “ *Le jeu du berger et de la bergère*,” in which the principal characters are Robin and Marian, a shepherd and shepherdess.” †† This appears the more probable, as the piece was not only very popular in France, but performed at the season when the May-games took place in England.

* Drayton’s Poly-Olbion, Song 26. Chalmers’s Poets, vol. iv. p. 373, 374.

† Warner’s Albion’s England, chapter 24. Chalmers’s Poets, vol. iv. p. 564.

‡ As You Like It, act i. sc. 1.

§ Lysons’s Environs of London, vol. i. p. 227.

** Beloe’s Anecdotes of Literature and scarce Books, vol. i. p. 401.

†† Douce’s Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 451.

Maid Marian, in the days of Shakspeare, was usually represented by a delicate, smooth-faced youth, who was dressed in all the fashionable finery of the times; and this assumption of the female garb gave, not without some reason, great offence to the puritanical dissenters, one of whom, exclaiming against the amusements of May-day, notices this, amongst some other abuses, in the following very curious passage:—

“The abuses which are committed in your May-games are infinite. The first whereof is this, that you doe use to attyre in woman’s apparrell whom you doe most commonly call May-marrians whereby you infringe that straight commandment which is given in Deut. xxii. 5., that men, must not put on women’s apparrell for feare of enormities. Nay I myself have seene in a May game a troupe, the greater part whereof hath been men, and yet have they been attyred so like into women, that their faces being hidde (as they were indeede) a man coulde not discerne them from women. The second abuse, which of all other is the greatest, is this, that it hath been toulde that your morice dauncers have daunced naked in nettes; what greater enticement unto naughtiness could have been devised? The third abuse is, that you (because you will loose no tyme) doe use commonly to runne into woodes in the night time, amongst maidens, to fet bowes, in so much as I have hearde of tenne maidens which went to fet May, and nine of them came home with childe.”*

That, in consequence of this custom, effeminate and coxcomical men were sarcastically compared to Maid Marian, appears from a passage in a pamphlet by Barnaby Rich, who, satirising the male attire, as worn by the fops of the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., cries out,—

“From whence commeth this wearing, and this embroidering of long locks, this curiosity that is used amongst men, in frizeling and curling of their haire, this gentlewoman-like starcht bands, so be-edged and be-laced, fitter for Maid Marian in a Moris dance, than for him that hath either that spirit or courage that shold be in a gentleman.”†

It will not seem surprising that the converse of this was occasionally applicable to the female sex; and that those women who adopted masculine airs and habits should be branded with a similarity to the clown who, though personating the lady of the May, never failed, however nice or affected he might be, to disclose by the boldness and awkwardness of his gesture and manner, both his rank and sex. Thus Falstaff is represented as telling the hostess, when he means to upbraid her for her masculine appearance and conduct, that “for womanhood Maid Marian may be the Deputy’s wife of the ward to thee.”‡ A fancy coronet of gilt metal, or interwoven with flowers, and a watchet coloured tunic, a kirtle or petticoat of green, as the livery of Robin Hood, were customary articles of decoration in the dress of the May-Queen.

Friar Tuck, the next of the four characters which we have mentioned as introduced into the May-games, was the chaplain of Robin Hood, and is noticed by Shakspeare, who makes one of the outlaws, in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, swear

“By the bare scalp of Robin Hood’s fat friar.”§

He is represented in the engraving of Mr. Tollet’s window as a Franciscan friar in the full clerical tonsure; for, as Mr. T. observes in giving an account of his window,

“When the parish priest were inhibited by the diocesan to assist in the May games, the Franciscans might give attendance, as being exempted from episcopal jurisdiction;” he adds that “most of Shakspeare’s friars are Franciscans,” and that in Sir David Dalrymple’s extracts from the book of the “Universal Kirk,” in the year 1576, he is styled “chaplain to Robin Huid, king of May.”**

* Fetherston’s Dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lascivious dancing. 1583, 12mo. sign. D. 7. apud Douce.

† The Honestie of this Age, 1615, 4to. p. 35.

‡ Act iv. sc. 1.

§ First Part of King Henry IV. act. iii. sc. 3.

** Reed’s Shakspeare, vol. xi. p. 438.

The last of this group was the boon companion of Robin, the "brave Little John," as he is termed in one of the ballads on this popular outlaw, and who "is first mentioned," remarks Mr. Douce, "together with Robin Hood, by Fordun the Scottish historian, who wrote in the fourteenth century, and who speaks of the celebration of the story of these persons in the theatrical performances of his time, and of the minstrel's songs relating to them, which he says the common people preferred to all other romances." *

With these four personages therefore, who were deemed so inseparable, that a character in Peele's *Edward I.* says, "We will live and die together, like Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tucke, and Maide Marian," † the performers in the simple English Morris, the Fool, Tom the Piper, and the Morris dancers, peculiarly so called from their dress and function, were, for a time, generally connected. Tom the Piper is thus mentioned by Drayton :

" Myself above Tom Piper to advance,
Which so bestirs him in the Morrice-dance
For penny wage." ‡

And Shakspeare, alluding to the violent gesticulations and music of the Morris dancers says, speaking of Cade the rebel,

—————" I have seen him
Caper upright like a wild morisco,
Shaking the bloody darts, as he his bells." §

The music accompanying the Morris and the May-games, was either the simple pipe, or the pipe and tabor, or the bag-pipe. In the following passage from a curious controversial pamphlet, published towards the close of the sixteenth century, the morris and the pipe and tabor are thus noticed :

" If *Menippus*, or the man in the moone, be so quicksighted, that he beholds these bitter sweete jests, these railing outcries ; this shouting at prelates to cast them downe, and heaving at Martin to hang him up for Martilmas biefe ; what would he imagine otherwise, then as that stranger, which seeing a Quintessence (beside the foole and the Maid Marian) of all the picked youth, strained out of an whole Endship, footing the morris about a May-pole, and he, not hearing the crie of the hounds, for the barking of dogs, (that is to say) the minstrelsie for the fidling, the tune for the sound, nor the pipe for the noise of the tabor, bluntly demanded if they were not all beside themselves, that they so lip'd and skip'd without an occasion." **

To this quotation Mr. Haslewood has annexed the subsequent ludicrous story from a tract entitled, "*Hay any worke for Cooper.*" It is a striking proof of the singular attraction and popularity of the May-games at this period :

" There is a neighbour of ours, an honest priest, who was sometimes (simple as he now stands) a vice in a play, for want of a better ; his name is Gliberie of Hawstead in Essex, hee goes much to the pulpit. On a time, I thinke it was the last May, he went up with a full resolution to doe his businesse with great commendations. But, see the fortune of it. A boy in the church, hearing either the summer lord with his May-game, or Robin Hood with his morice daunce, going by the church, out goes the boye. Good Glibery, though he were in the pulpit, yet had a mind to his old companions abroad (a company of merry grigs you must thinke them to be, as merry as a vice on a stage), seeing the boy going out, finished his matter presently with John of London's amen, saying, ha ye faith, boy ! are they there ? Then ha with thee, and so came down and among them he goes." ††

* Douce's *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. ii. p. 450. Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, 1759, folio, tom ii. p. 104. "In this time," says Stow, that is, about the year 1190, in the reign of Richard I., "were many robbers and outlawes, among the which Robin Hood and Little John, renowned theeves, continued in woods, despoiling and robbing the goods of the rich." *Annals*, p. 159.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. iv. p. 267. note by Malone.

‡ Eclogue iii. Chalmers's *Poets*, vol. iv. p. 433.

§ Second Part of *King Henry the Sixth*, act iii. sc. 1.

** Plaine Percevall the peace-maker of England, &c. &c., *Vide Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 250.

†† *Censura Literaria*, vol. x. p. 251.

That the music of the bag-pipe was highly esteemed in the days of Shakspeare, and even preferred to the tabor and pipe, we have a strong instance in his *Winter's Tale*, where a servant enters announcing Autolicus in the following terms: "If you did but hear the pedlar at the door, you would never dance again after a tabor and pipe; no, the bag-pipe could not move you;"* and that especially in the country, it was a frequent accompaniment to the morris bells, the numerous collections of madrigals, published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, afford many proofs. Thus, from a collection printed in 1600:

"Harke, harke, I heare the dancing
And a nimble morris prancing;
The bagpipe and the morris bells,
That they are not farre hence us tells;
Come let us all goe thither,
And dance like friends together:"†

and from another, allusive to the May-games, edited by Thomas Morley:

"Now is the month of Maying,
When merry lads are playing; Fa la la
Each with his bonny lasse,
Upon the greeny grasse. Fa la la.
The spring clad all in gladness,
Doth laugh at winter's sadnesse;
And to the bagpipe's sound,
The nimps tread out their ground.

About the May-pole new with glee and merriment,
While as the bagpipe tooted it,
Thirsis and Cloe fine together footed it; Fa la la."‡

The Morris and the May-game of Robin Hood attained their most perfect form when united with the Hobby-Horse and the Dragon. Of these the former was the resemblance of the head and tail of a horse, manufactured in pasteboard, and attached to a person whose business it was, whilst he seemed to ride gracefully on its back, to imitate the prancings and curvettings of that noble animal, whose supposed feet were concealed by a foot-cloth reaching to the ground; and the latter, constructed of the same materials, was made to hiss and vibrate his wings, and was frequently attacked by the man on the hobby-horse, who then personated the character of St. George, §

In the reigns therefore of Elizabeth and James I. these eight masqueraders, consisting of Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck, Little John, the Fool, Tom the Piper, the Hobby-Horse and the Dragon, with from two to ten morris-dancers, or, in lieu of them, the same number of Robin Hood's men in coats, hoods, and hose of green, with a painted pole in the centre, represented the most complete establishment of the May-game.*

* Act iv. sc. 3.

† Canto Madrigals, of 5 and 6 parts, apt for the viols and voices. Made and newly published by Thomas Weelkes of the Colledge at Winchester, Organist. At London, printed by Thomas Este, the assigne of Thomas Morley. 1600. 4to.

‡ Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 34.

§ It is probable indeed from the subsequent Madrigal, that the Hobby-horse was frequently attached to, and provided for, by the town or village.

"Our country swains, in the morris daunce,
Thus woo'd and win their brides;
Will, for our towne, the hobby horse
A pleasure frolike rides."*

** "The English were famed," observes Dr. Grey, "for these and such like diversions; and even the old, as well as young persons, formerly followed them: a remarkable instance of which is given by Sir William Temple (*Miscellanea*, Part 3. *Essay of Health and Long Life*), who makes mention of a Morrice Dance in Herefordshire, from a noble person. who told him he had a pamphlet in his library written by a very ingenious gentleman of that county, which gave an account how, in such a year of King James's reign, there went about the country a sett of Morrice Dancers, composed of ten men, who danced a Maid Marian, and a taber and pipe: and how these ten, one with another, made up twelve hundred years. 'Tis not so much, says he, that so many in one county should live to that age. as that they should be in vigour and humour to travel and dance." Grey's Notes on Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 382.

* Vide Cantus primo. Madrigals to 3, 4, 5, and 6 voyces. Made and newly published by Thomas Weelkes at London, printed by Thomas Este, 1597, 4to. Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 9—10.

All these characters may be traced, indeed, so far back as the middle of the fifteenth century; and, accordingly, Mr. Strutt, in his interesting romance, entitled "Queen-hoo Hall," has introduced a very pleasing and accurate description of the May-games and Morris of Robin Hood, which, as written in a lively and dramatic style, and not in the least differing from what they continued to be in the youthful days of Shakspeare, and before they were broken in upon by the fanaticism of the Puritans, we shall copy in this place for the entertainment of our readers.

"In the front of the pavilion, a large square was staked out, and fenced with ropes, to prevent the crowd from pressing upon the performers, and interrupting the diversion; there were also two bars at the bottom of the inclosure, through which the actors might pass and repass, as occasion required.

"Six young men first entered the square, clothed in jerkins of leather, with axes upon their shoulders like woodmen, and their heads bound with large garlands of ivy-leaves intertwined with sprigs of hawthorn. Then followed,

"Six young maidens of the village, dressed in blue kirtles, with garlands of primroses on their heads, leading a fine sleek cow, decorated with ribbons of various colours, interspersed with flowers; and the horns of the animal were tipped with gold. These were succeeded by

"Six foresters, equipped in green tunics, with hoods and hosen of the same colour; each of them carried a bugle-horn attached to a baldrick of silk, which he sounded as he passed the barrier. After them came

"Peter Lanaret, the baron's chief falconer, who personified Robin Hood; he was attired in a bright grass-green tunic, fringed with gold; his hood and his hosen were parti-coloured, blue and white; he had a large garland of rose-buds on his head, a bow bent in his hand, a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bugle-horn depending from a baldrick of light blue tarantine, embroidered with silver; he had also a sword and a dagger, the hilts of both being richly embossed with gold.

"Fabian a page, as Little John, walked at his right hand; and Cecil Cellerman the butler, as Will Stukely, at his left. These, with ten others of the jolly outlaw's attendants who followed, were habited in green garments, bearing their bows bent in their hands, and their arrows in their girdles. Then came

"Two maidens, in orange-coloured kirtles with white courtpies, * strewing flowers; followed immediately by

"The maid Marian, elegantly habited in a watchet-coloured † tunic reaching to the ground; over which she wore a white linen rochet ‡ with loose sleeves, fringed with silver, and very neatly plaited; her girdle was of silver baudekin, § fastened with a double bow on the left side; her long flaxen hair was divided into many ringlets, and flowed upon her shoulders; the top part of her head was covered with a net-work cawl of gold, upon which was placed a garland of silver, ornamented with blue violets. She was supported by

"Two bride-maidens, in sky-coloured rochets girt with crimson girdles, wearing garlands upon their heads of blue and white violets. After them, came

"Four other females in green courtpies, and garlands of violets and cowslips: Then

"Sampson the smith, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter-staff on his shoulder; and Morris the mole-taker, who represented Much the miller's son, having a long pole with an inflated bladder attached to one end; ** And after them

"The May-pole, drawn by eight fine oxen, decorated with scarfs, ribbons, and flowers of divers colours; and the tips of their horns were embellished with gold. The rear was closed by

"The Hobby-horse and the Dragon.

"When the May-pole was drawn into the square, the foresters sounded their horns, and the populace expressed their pleasure by shouting incessantly until it reached the place assigned for its elevation:—and during the time the ground was preparing for its reception, the barriers of the bottom of the inclosure were opened for the villagers to approach, and adorn it with ribbons, garlands, and flowers, as their inclination prompted them.

"The pole being sufficiently ornamented with finery, the square was cleared from such as had no part to perform in the pageant; and then it was elevated amidst the reiterated acclamations of the spectators. The woodmen and the milk-maidens danced around it according to the rustic fashion; the measure was played by Peretto Cheveritte, the baron's chief minstrel, on the

* *Courtpie*, in women's dress, a short vest. Strutt.

† *Watchet-coloured*, pale blue. Strutt.

‡ *Rochet*, a lawn garment resembling a surplice gathered at the wrists. Strutt.

§ *Baudekin*, a cloth of gold tissue, with figures in silk, for female dress. Strutt.

** The mole-taker, in this place, personates the character of the fool or domestic buffoon.

bagpipes accompanied with the pipe and tabour, performed by one of his associates. When the dance was finished, Gregory the jester, who undertook to play the hobby-horse, came forward with his appropriate equipment, and, frisking up and down the square without restriction, imitated the galloping, curvetting, ambling, trotting, and other paces of a horse, to the infinite satisfaction of the lower classes of the spectators. * He was followed by Peter Parker the baron's ranger, who personated a dragon, hissing, yelling, and shaking his wings with wonderful ingenuity; and to complete the mirth, Morris, in the character of Much, having small bells attached to his knees and elbows, capered here and there between the two monsters in the form of a dance; and as often as he came near to the sides of the inclosure, he cast sily a handful of meal into the faces of the gaping rustics, or rapped them about their heads with the bladder tied at the end of his pole. † In the mean time, Sampson, representing Friar Tuck, walked with much gravity around the square, and occasionally let fall his heavy staff upon the toes of such of the crowd as he thought were approaching more forward than they ought to do; and if the sufferers cried out from the sense of pain, he addressed them in a solemn tone of voice, advising them to count their beads, say a paternoster or two, and to beware of purgatory. These vagaries were highly palatable to the populace, who announced their delight by repeated plaudits and loud bursts of laughter; for this reason they were continued for a considerable length of time: but Gregory, beginning at last to falter in his paces, ordered the dragon to fall back: the well-nurtured beast, being out of breath, readily obeyed, and their two companions followed their example; which concluded this part of the pastime.

“Then the archers set up a target at the lower part of the Green, and made trial of their skill in a regular succession. Robin Hood and Will Stukely excelled their comrades: and both of them lodged an arrow in the centre circle of gold, so near to each other that the difference could not readily be decided, which occasioned them to shoot again; when Robin struck the gold a second time, and Stukely's arrow was affixed upon the edge of it. Robin was therefore adjudged the conqueror; and the prize of honour, a garland of laurel embellished with variegated ribbons, was put upon his head; and to Stukely was given a garland of ivy, because he was the second best performer in that contest.

“The pageant was finished with the archery; and the procession began to move away, to make room for the villagers, who afterwards assembled in the square, and amused themselves by dancing round the May-pole in promiscuous companies, according to the ancient custom.” ‡

In consequence of the opposition, however, of the Puritans, during the close of Elizabeth's reign, who considered the rights of May-day as relics of paganism, much havoc was made among the *Dramatis Personæ* of this festivity. Sometimes instead of Robin and Marian only a Lord or Lady of the day was adopted; frequently the friar was not suffered to appear, and still more frequently was the hobby-horse interdicted. This zealous interference of the sectarists was ridiculed by the poets of the day, and among the rest by Shakspeare, who quotes a line from a satirical ballad on this subject, and represents Hamlet as terming it an epitaph; “Else shall he suffer not thinking on,” says he, “with the hobby-horse; whose epitaph is, “For, O, for, O, the hobby horse is forgot.” § He has the same allusion in *Love's Labour's Lost*; ** and Ben Jonson has still more explicitly noticed the neglect into which this character in the May-games had fallen in his days.

“But see, the Hobby-horse is forgot.
Foole, it must be your lot,
To supply his want with faces,
And some other Buffon graces;” ††

* The management of the hobby-horse appears to have been the most difficult part of the May-day festivities, and from the following passage in an old play, to have required some preparatory discipline. A character personating this piece of pageantry, and angry with the mayor of the town as being his rival, calls out, “Let the mayor play the hobby-horse among his brethren, an he will, I hope our towne-lads cannot want a hobby-horse. Have I practis'd my reines, my careeres, my pranckers, my ambles, my false trots, my smooth ambles and Canterbury paces, and shall master mayor put me besides the hobby-horse? Have I borrowed the fore horse bells, his plumes and braveries, nay had his mane new shorne and frizl'd, and shall the mayor put me besides the hobby-horse?” *The Vow breaker*, by Sampson.

† The morris-dance in this description of the May-game seems to have been performed chiefly by the fool with the occasional assistance of the hobby-horse, which was always decorated with bells, and the dragon.

‡ Strutt's *Queenhoo-Hall*, a romance, vol. i. p. 13. et seq.

§ Act iii. sc. 2.

** Act. iii. sc. 1.

†† Entertainment of the Queen and Prince at Althorpe. 1603. fol. edit. vol. i. p. 99.

and again, still more pointedly,—

“*Clo.* They should be Morris dancers by their gingle, but they have no napkins.

Coc. No, nor a hobby-horse.

Clo. Oh, he's *often forgotten*, that's no rule; but there is no maid Marian nor Friar amongst them, which is the surer mark.

Coc. Nor a Foole that I see.”*

In Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragi-comedy called “*Women Pleased*,” the aversion of the Puritans to this festive beast is strikingly depicted; where the person who was destined to perform the hobby-horse, being converted by his wife, exclaims vehemently against the task imposed upon him.

“*Hob.* I do defie thee and thy foot-cloth too,
And tell thee to thy face, this prophane riding
I feel it in my conscience, and I dare speak it,
This unedified ambling hath brought a scourge upon us.—

Far. Will you dance no more, neighbour?

Hob. Surely no,
Carry the beast to his crib: I have renounc'd him
And all his works.

Soto. Shall the Hobby-horse be forgot then?
The hopeful Hobby-horse, shall he lye founder'd?

Hob. I cry out on't,
’Twas the forerunning sin brought in those tilt-staves,
They brandish ’gainst the church, the Devil calls *May poles*.”†

From one of these puritans, named Stephen Gosson, we learn, likewise, that Morrice-dancers and Hobby-horses had been introduced even upon the stage, during the early part of the reign of Elizabeth; for this writer, in a tract published about 1579, and entitled “*Plays Confuted*,” says, that “the Devil beeside the beautie of the houses, and the stages, sendeth in gearish apparell, maskes, ranting, tumbling, dauncing of gigges, galiardes, morisces, hobbi-horses, etc.”‡ By the continued railings and invectives, however, of these fanatics, the May-games were at length so broken in upon, that had it not been for the “*Book of Sports, or lawful Recreations upon Sunday after Evening-prayers, and upon Holy-days*,” issued by King James in 1618, they would have been totally extinct. This curious volume permitted May-games, Morris-dances, Whitsun-ales, the setting up of May-poles, etc. § and had it not allowed church-ales, and dancing on the Sabbath, would have been unexceptionable in its tendency; for as honest Burton observes in allusion to this very Declaration of King James,

“Dancing, Singing, Masking, Mumming, Stage-playes, howsoever they be heavily censured by some severe Catoes, yet if opportunely and soberly used, may justly be approved. ‘*Melius*

* The *Metamorphosed Gipsies*, fol. edit. vol. 2. p. 65.—This folio edition of Jonson's works, in two volumes, dated 1640, is not regularly paged to the close of each volume; for instance, in vol. i. the Dramas terminate at p. 668, and then the Epigrammes, Forest, Masques, &c. commence with p. 1.

† Act iv. sc. 1.—Jonson in his “*Bartholmew Fayre*,” acted in the year 1614, has a character of this kind, a Baker, who has undergone a similar conversion, and is thus introduced:—

“*Win. W.* What call you the Reverend *Elder*, ye told me of? your Banbury-man.

Joh. Rabbi Busy, Sir, he is more than an *Elder*, he is a *Prophet*, Sir.

Quar. O, I know him! a Baker, is he not?

Joh. Hee was a Baker, Sir, but hee do's dreame now, and see visions, he has given over his Trade.

Quar. I remember that too: out of a scruple hee tooke, that (in spie'd conscience) those Cakes hee made, were serv'd to Bridales, May-poles, Morrisses, and such prophane feasts and meetings; his Christen-name is *Zeale-of-the-land Busye*.”

Jonson's Works, fol. edit. vol. ii. p. iv. act i. sc. 3.

‡ Reed's *Shakspeare*, vol. xviii. p. 198, note, Steevens.

§ Wilson, censuring these indulgences, places the era of the publication of the *Book of Sports* under 1617, and says of it, that “some of the Bishops, pretending Recreations, and liberty to servants and the common people (of which they carved to themselves too much already) procured the King to put out a Book to permit dancing about May-poles, Church-ales, and such debauched exercises upon the Sabbath-Day after Evening-Prayer (being a specious way to make the King, and them, acceptable to the Rout): which Book came out with a command, injoyning all Ministers to read it to their parishioners, and to approve of it; and those that did not, were brought into the high Commission, imprisoned and suspended.” *The History of Great Britain, being the Life and Reign of King James the First*, relating to what passed from his first access to the Crown, till his death. Folio, London, 1653. p. 105.

est fodere, quam saltare,' saith Augustin : but what is that if they delight in it? 'Nemo saltat sobrius.' But in what kind of dance? I know these sports have many oppugners, whole volumes writ against them; when as all they say (if duly considered) is but *ignoratio Elenchi*; and some again, because they are now cold and wayward, past themselves, cavil at all such youthful sports in others, as he did in the Comedy; they think them, *illico nasci senes*, &c. Some out of preposterous zeal object many times trivial arguments, and because of some abuse, will quite take away the good use, as if they should forbid wine, because it makes men drunk; but in my judgment they are too stern: there 'is a time for all things, a time to mourn, a time to dance.' Eccles. 3. 4. 'a time to embrace, a time not to embrace,' (ver. 5.) 'and nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works,' ver. 22. For my part, I will subscribe to the King's Declaration, and was ever of that mind, those May-games, Wakes, and Whitsun-ales, &c. if they be not at unseasonable hours, may justly be permitted. Let them freely feast, sing and dance, have their poppet-plays, hobby-horses, tabers, crouds, bagpipes, &c., play at ball, and barley-brakes, and what sports and recreations they like best." *

All these festivities, however, on May-day were again set aside, by still greater enthusiasts, during the period of the Commonwealth, and were once more revived at the Restoration; at present, few vestiges remain either of those ancient rites, or of those attendant on other popular periodical festivals. †

Several of the amusements, and some of the characters attendant on the celebration of May-day, were again introduced at Whitsuntide, especially the morris-dance, which was as customary on this period of festivity as on the one immediately preceding it. Thus Shakspeare, in King Henry V., makes the Dauphin say, alluding to the youthful follies of the English monarch,

—————"Let us do it with no show of fear;
No, with no more, than if we heard that England
Were busied with a Whitsun morris-dance." ‡

The rural sports and feasting at Whitsuntide were usually designated by the term Whitsun-ales; ale being in the time of Shakspeare, and for a century or two, indeed, before him, synonymous with festival or merry-making. Chaucer and the author of Pierce Plowman use the word repeatedly in this sense, and the following passages from our great poet, from Jonson, and from Ascham, prove that it was familiar, in their time, in the sense of simple carousing, church-feasting, and Whitsuntide recreation. Launcelot, in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, exclaims to Speed, "Thou hast not so much charity in thee, as to go to the *ale* with a Christian;" § and Ascham, speaking of the conduct of husbandmen, in his Toxophilus, observes that those which have their dinner and drink in the field, "have fatter barnes in the harvest, than they which will either sleape at noonetyme of the day, or els make merye with theyr neighbours at the ale." ** In the chorus to the first act of *Pericles*, it is recorded of an old song, that

"It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves, and holy-ales."

And Jonson says,

———"All the neighbourhood, from old records
Of antique proverbs drawn from Whitson lords,
And their authorities at wakes and ales,
With country precedents, and old wives tales,
We bring you now." ††

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. fol. p. 174

† "The last May-pole in London was taken down in 1717, and conveyed to Wanstead in Essex, where it was fixed in the Park for the support of an immensely large telescope. Its original height was upwards of one hundred feet above the surface of the ground, and its station on the East side of Somerset-House, where the new church now stands.—POPE thus perpetuates its remembrance:

"Amidst the area wide they took their stand,
Where the tall May-pole once o'erlook'd the Strand."

Clavis Calendaria, vol. i. p. 318.

‡ Act. ii. sc. 4.

** Ascham's Works apud Bennet, p. 62, 63.

§ Act ii. sc. 6.

†† Jonson's Works, fol. edit.

It will be necessary, in this place, therefore, to notice briefly, as being periods of festivity, the various Ales which were observed by our ancestors in the sixteenth century. They may be enumerated under the heads of Leet-ale, Lamb-ale, Bride-ale, Clerk-ale, Church-ale and Whitsun-ale. We shall confine our attention at present, however, principally to the two latter; for of the Lamb-ale and Bride-ale, an occasion will occur to speak more at large in a subsequent part of this chapter, and a very few words will suffice with regard to the Leet-ale and the Clerk-ale; the former being merely the dinner provided for the jury and customary tenants at the court-leet of a manor, or view of frank pledge, formerly held once or twice a year, before the steward of the leet;* to this court Shakspeare alludes, in his *Taming of the Shrew*, where the servant tells Sly, that in his dream he would "rail upon the hostess of the house," and threaten to

—————"present her at the leet:"§

and the latter, which usually took place at Easter, is thus mentioned by Aubrey in his manuscript *History of Wiltshire*. "In the Easter holidays was the Clarkes-Ale, for his private benefit and the solace of the neighbourhood." ‡

The Church-ale was a festival instituted sometimes in honour of the church-saint, but more frequently for the purpose of contributing towards the repair or decoration of the church. On this occasion it was the business of the church-wardens to brew a considerable quantity of strong ale, which was sold to the populace in the church-yard, and to the better sort in the church itself, a practice which, independent of the profit arising from the sale of the liquor, led to great pecuniary advantages; for the rich thought it a meritorious duty, beside paying for their ale, to offer largely to the holy fund. It was no uncommon thing indeed to have four, six, or eight of these ales yearly, and sometimes one or more parishes agreed to hold annually a certain number of these meetings, and to contribute individually a certain sum. Of this a very curious proof may be drawn from the following stipulation, preserved in *Dodsworth's Manuscripts* in the Bodleian Library:—

"The parishioners of Elveston and Okebrook, in Derbyshire, agree jointly to brew four Ales, and every Ale of one quarter of malt, betwixt this (the time of contract) and the fast of saint John Baptist next coming. And that every inhabitant of the said town of Okebrook shall be at the several Ales. And every husband and his wife shall pay two pence, and every cottager one penny, and all the inhabitants of Elveston shall have and receive all the profits and advantages coming of the said Ales, to the use and behoof of the said church of Elveston. And the inhabitants of Elveston shall brew eight Ales betwixt this and the feast of saint John Baptist, at the which Ales the inhabitants of Okebrook shall come and pay as before rehersed. And if he be away at one Ale, to pay at the toder Ale for both, &c." §

The date of this document is anterior to the Reformation, but that church-ales were equally popular and frequent in the days of Shakspeare will be evident from the subsequent passages in Carew and Philip Stubbes. The historian of Cornwall, whose work was first printed in 1602, says that,

"For the church-ale, two young men of the parish are yerely chosen by their last foregoers, to be wardens; who, dividing the task, make collection among the parishioners, of what soever provision it pleaseth them voluntarily to bestow. This they imploy in brewing, baking, and other acates, against Whitsontide; upon which holy-dayes the neighbours meet at the church-house, and there merily feede on their owne victuals, contributing some petty portion to the stock; which, by many smalls, groweth to a meetley greatness: for there is entertayned a kinde of emulation betweene these wardens, who by his graciousness in gathering, and good husbandry in expending, can best advance the churches profit. Besides, the neighbour parishes at those times lovingly

* "A leet," observes Bullokar, in his *English Expositor*, 1616, "is a court, or law-day, holden commonly every half year."

† Act i. sc. 2.

§ MSS. Bibl. Bod., vol. cxlviii. fol. 97.

‡ Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 129, note.

visit one another, and this way frankly spend their money together. The afternoones are consumed in such exercises as olde and yong folke (having leysure) doe accustomedly weare out the time withall."*

Stubbes in his violent philippic declares that,

"In certaine townes, where drunken Bacchus bears swaie against Christmas and Easter, Whitsunday, or some other time, the churchwardens, for so they call them, of every parish, with the consent of the whole parish, provide half a score or twentie quarters of mault, whereof some they buy of the church stocke, and some is given to them of the parishioners themselves, every one conferring somewhat, according to his ability; which mault being made into very strong ale, or beer, is set to sale, either in the church or in some other place assigned to that purpose. Then, when this nippitatum, this huffe-cappe, as they call it, this nectar of life, is set abroach, well is he that can get the soonest to it, and spends the most at it, for he is counted the godliest man of all the rest, and most in God's favour, because it is spent upon his church forsooth."†

There is but too much reason to suppose that the satire of this bitter writer was not, in this instance, ill directed, and that meetings of this description, though avowedly for the express benefit of the church, were often productive of licentiousness, and consequently highly injurious both to morals and religion. A few lines from Ben Jonson will probably place this beyond doubt. In his *Masque of Queens*, performed at Whitehall, 1609, he represents one of his witches as exclaiming

"I had a dagger: what did I with that?
Kill'd an infant, to have his fat:
A Piper it got, at a Church-ale,"‡

Returning to the consideration of the Whitsuntide amusements, it may be observed, that not only was the morris a constituent part in their celebration, but that the Maid Marian of the May-games was frequently introduced: thus Shirley represents one of his characters exclaiming against rural diversions in the following manner:

—————"Observe with what solemnity,
They keep their wakes, and throw for pewter candlestickes,
How they become the morris, with whose bells
They ring all into Whitson ales, and sweate
Through twentie scarffes and napkins, till the Hobby-horse
Tire, and the maide Marrian, dissolv'd to a gelly,
Be kept for spoone meate."§

The festivities, indeed, on this occasion, as at those on May-day, were often regulated by a Lord and Lady of the Whitsun-ales.** Very frequently, however, there was elected only a Lord of Misrule, and as the church or holy ales were not unfrequently combined with the merriments of this season, the church-yard, especially on the sabbath-day, was too generally the scene of rejoicing. The severity of Stubbes, when censuring this profanation of consecrated ground, will scarcely be deemed too keen:

"First," says he, "all the wilde heads of the parish, flocking together, chuse them a ground captaine (of mischief) whom they inrolle with the title of "my Lord of misrule," and him they crowne with great solemnitie, and adopt for their king. This king annoynted, chooseth foorth twentie, fourtie, threescore, or a hundred lustie guttes like to himselfe to wait upon his lordly majesty, and to garde his noble person.—(Here he describes the dress of the morris dancers, as quoted in a former page, and proceeds as follows.) Thus all things set in order, then have they their hobby-horses, their dragons and other antiques, together with their baudie pipers, and

* Carew's Survey of Cornwall, edit. of 1769. p. 68.

† Anatomie of Abuses, A. D. 1595.

‡ Jonson's Works, fol. edit. vol. i. p. 166.

§ The Lady of Pleasure, act i.

** The former of which is thus noticed by Sir Philip Sidney:

"Strephon, with leavy twigs of laurell tree,
A garlant made on temples for to weare,
For he then chosen was the dignitie
Of village Lord that Whitsuntide to beare."

The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadie, 7th edit. fol. 1629, p. 84.

thundering drummers, to strike up the Devils Daunce withall : then march this heathen company towards the church and church-yarde, their pypers pyping, their drummers thundering, their stumpes dauncing, their belles jynghing, their handkercheefes fluttering about their heads like madde men, their hobbie horses, and other monsters skirmishing amongst the throng : and in this sorte they goe to the church like Devils incarnate, with such a confused noise, that no man can heare his owne voyce. Then the foolish people they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere, and mount upon formes and pewes, to see these goodly pageants solemnized in this sort. Then after this about the church they goe againe and againe, and so forth into the church yeard, where they have commonly their summer haules, their bowers, arbours, and banquetting houses set up, wherein they feast, banquet, and daunce all that day, and (peradventure) all that night too. And thus these terrestrial furies spend the Sabboth day. Another sort of fantastical fooles bring to these helhoundes (the Lord of misrule and his complices) some bread, some good ale, some new cheese, some old cheese, some custardes, some cracknels, some cakes, some flaunes, some tartes, some creame, some meat, some one thing, some another ; but if they knewe that as often as they bringe anye to the maintenance of these execrable pastimes, they offer sacrifice to the Devill and Sathanas, they would repente and withdrawe their handes, which God graunt they may.”*

Dramatic exhibitions, called Whitsun plays, were common, at this season, both in town and country, and in the latter they were chiefly of a pastoral character. Shakspeare has an allusion to them in his *Winter's Tale*, where Perdita, addressing Florizel, says,

—————“ Come, take your flowers :
Methinks, I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun' pastorals.”†

Soon after Whitsuntide began the season of sheep-shearing, which was generally terminated about Midsummer, and either at its commencement or close, was distinguished by the Lamb-ale or Sheepshearing Feast. At Kidlington in Oxfordshire, it seems to have been ushered in by ceremonies of a peculiar kind, for, according to Blount,

“ The Monday after the Whitsun week, a fat lamb was provided, and the maidens of the town, having their thumbs tied behind them, were permitted to run after it, and she who with her mouth took hold of the lamb was declared the Lady of the Lamb, which, being killed and cleaned, but with the skin hanging upon it, was carried on a long pole before the lady and her companions to the green, attended with music, and a morisco dance of men, and another of women. The rest of the day was spent in mirth and merry glee. Next day the lamb, partly baked, partly boiled, and partly roasted, was served up for the lady's feast, where she sat majestically at the upper end of the table, and her companions with her, the music playing during the repast, which, being finished, the solemnity ended.”‡

The most usual mode, however, of celebrating this important period was by a dinner, music, with songs, and the election of a Shepherd King, an office always conferred upon the individual whose flock had produced the earliest lamb. The dinner is thus enjoined by the rustic muse of Tusser :—

“ Wife, make us a dinner, spare flesh neither corne,
Make wafers and cakes, for our sheepe must be shorne,
At sheep-shearing, neighbours none other things crave,
But good cheare and welcome, like neighbours to have.”§

But it is from Drayton that we derive the most minute account of the festival ; who in the fourteenth song of his *Poly-Olbion*, and still more at large in his ninth *Eclogue*, has given a most pleasing picture of this rural holy-day :—

“ When the new-wash'd flock from the river's side,
Coming as white as January's snow,
The ram with nosegays bears his horns in pride,
And no less brave the bell-wether doth go.

* *Anatomie of Abuses*, 1595. p. 107.

† Act iv. sc. 3.—Whitsun playes or mysteries, which at first were exclusively drawn from the sacred page, may be traced to the fourteenth century ; those which were performed at Chester have been attributed to Ranulph Higden, the chronicler, who died 1363.

‡ Blount's *Ancient Tenures*, p. 49, and Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 316.

§ Tusser apud Hilton, p. 80.

After their fair flocks in a lusty rout,
Come the gay swains with bag-pipes strongly blown,
And busied, though this solemn sport about,
Yet had each one an eye unto his own.

And by the ancient statutes of the field,
He that his flocks the earliest lamb should bring,
(As it fell out then, Rowland's charge to yield)
Always for that year was the shepherd's king.

And soon preparing for the shepherd's board,
Upon a green that curiously was squar'd,
With country cates being plentifully stor'd :
And 'gainst their coming handsomely prepar'd.

New whig, with water from the clearest stream,
Green plumbs, and wildings, cherries chief of feast,
Fresh cheese, and dowssets, curds, and clouted cream,
Spic'd syllibubs, and cyder of the best :

And to the same down solemnly they sit,
In the fresh shadow of their summer bowers,
With sundry sweets them every way to fit,
The neighb'ring vale despoiled of her flowers.—

When now, at last, as lik'd the shepherd's king,
(At whose command they all obedient were)
Was pointed, who the roundelay should sing,
And who again the under-song should bear.*

Shakspeare also, in his *Winter's Tale*, has presented us not only with a list of the good things necessary for a sheep-shearing feast, but he describes likewise the attentions which were due, on this occasion, from the hostess, or Shepherd's Queen.

"Let me see," says the Clown, "what I am to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? Three pound of sugar; five pound of currants; rice——What will this sister of mine do with rice? But my father hath made her mistress of the feast, and she lays it on. She hath made me four-and-twenty nosegays for the shearers: three-man song-men all, † and very good ones; but they are most of them means ‡ and bases: but one Puritan amongst them, and he sings psalms to hornpipes. I must have saffron, to colour the warden pies; mace,—dates,—none; that's out of my note: nutmegs, seven; a race, or two of ginger: but that I may beg;—four pound of prunes, and as many of raisins o' the sun." §

The culinary articles in this detail are somewhat more expensive than those enumerated by Drayton; and Mr. Steevens, in a note on this passage of the *Winter's Tale*, observes that

"The expense attending these festivities, appears to have afforded matter of complaint. Thus, in "*Questions of profitable and pleasant Concernings*," &c. 1594: "If it be a sheep-shearing feast, maister Baily can entertaine you with his bill of reckonings to his maister of three sheap-heard's wages, spent on fresh cates, besides spices and saffron pottage."

The shepherd's reproof to his adopted daughter, Perdita, as Polixenes remarks,

—————"the prettiest low-born lass, that ever
Ran on the green-sward,"

implies indirectly the duties which were expected by the peasants, on this day, from their rural queen, and which seems to have been sufficiently numerous and laborious:—

"Fye, daughter, when my old wife liv'd, upon
This day, she was both pantler, butler, cook;
Both dame and servant: welcom'd all; serv'd all:
Would sing her song, and dance her turn: now here,

* Chalmers's Poets, vol. iv. p. 443.

‡ By *means* are meant tenors.

† Singers of catches in three parts.

§ Act iv. sc. 2.

At upper end o'the table, now, ithe middle ;
 On his shoulder, and his: her face o'fire
 With labour ; and the thing, she took to quench it,
 She would to each one sip : You are retir'd,
 As if you were a feasted one, and not
 The hostess of the meeting : Pray you, bid
 These unknown friends to us welcome : for it is
 A way to make us better friends, more known.
 Come quench your blushes ; and present yourself
 That which you are, mistress o'the feast : Come on,
 And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,
 As your good flock shall prosper."*

It should be remarked that one material part of this welcome appears, from the context, to have consisted in the distribution of various flowers, suited to the ages of the respective visitors, a ceremony which was, probably, customary at this season of rejoicing.

" *Perdita*. Give me those flowers there, Dorcas.—Reverend sirs,
 For you there's rosemary, and rue ; these keep
 Seeming, and savour, all the winter long :
 Grace, and remembrance, be to you both,
 And welcome to our shearing ! ———

————— Here's flowers for you ;
 Hot lavender, mints, savory, majoram ;
 The marigold, that goes to bed with the sun,
 And with him rises weeping ; these are flowers
 Of middle summer, and, I think, they are given
 To men of middle age : You are very welcome.—

————— Now, my fairest friend,
 I would I had some flowers of the spring, that might
 Become your time of day ; and yours, and yours ;
 That wear upon your virgin branches yet
 Your maidenheads growing :—O, these I lack,
 To make you garlands of."

A custom somewhat allied to this, that of scattering flowers on the streams at shearing time, has been long observed in the south-west of England, and is thus alluded to as an ancient rite by Dyer, in his beautifully descriptive poem entitled "The Fleece :"

————— " With light fantastic toe, the nymphs
 Thither assembled, thither ev'ry swain ;
 And o'er the dimpled stream a thousand flowers,
 Pale lilies, roses, violets and pinks,
 Mixt with the greens of burnet, mint and thyme,
 And trefoil, sprinkled with their sportive arms.
 Such custom holds along the irriguous vales,
 From Wreakin's brow to rocky Dolvoryn,
 Sabrina's early haunt."†

That one of the principal seasons of rejoicing should take place on securely collecting the fruits of the field, it is natural to expect ; and accordingly, in almost every country, a Harvest-Home, or Feast, has been observed on this occasion.

Much of the festivity and jocular freedom, however, which subsisted formerly at this period, has been worn away by the increasing refinements and distinctions of society. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, indeed, during a part of the eighteenth, the Harvest, or Mell, Supper, as it was sometimes called,

* Act iv. sc. 3.—I believe the custom of choosing a king and queen at the sheep-shearing feast, is still continued in several of our counties ; that it was commonly observed, at least, in the time of Thomson, is evident from the following lines, taken from his description of this festival :—

" One, chief, in gracious dignity enthron'd,
 Shines o'er the rest, the Pas'tral Queen, and rays
 Her smiles, sweet-beaming on her Shepherd King."

Summer.

† Dyer's *Fleece*, book i. *sub finem*.

from the French word *Mêler*, to mingle or mix together, was a scene not only remarkable for merriment and hospitality, but for a temporary suspension of all inequality between master and man. The whole family sate down at the same table, and conversed, danced, and sang together during the entire night without difference or distinction of any kind; and, in many places indeed, this freedom of manner subsisted during the whole period of getting in the Harvest. Thus Tusser, recommending the social equality of the Harvest-tide, exclaims,

“ In harvest time, harvest folke, servants and al,
should make altogether, good cheere in the hal:
And fill out the blacke bol, of bleith to their song,
and let them be merrie, al harvest time long.”*

Of this ancient convivial license, a modern rural poet has drawn a most pleasing picture, lamenting, at the same time, that the Harvest-Feast of the present day is but the phantom of what it was:—

“ The aspect only with the substance gone

Behold the sound oak table's massy frame
Bestride the kitchen floor! the careful dame
And gen'rous host invite their friends around,
While all that clear'd the crop, or till'd the ground,
Are guests by right of custom:—
Here once a year Distinction low'rs its crest,
The master, servant, and the merry guest,
Are equal all; and round the happy ring
The reaper's eyes exulting glances fling,
And, warm'd with gratitude, he quits his place,
With sun-burnt hands and ale-enliven'd face,
Refills the jug his honour'd host to tend,
To serve at once the master and the friend;
Proud thus to meet his smiles, to share his tale,
His nuts, his conversation, and his ale.
Such were the days,—of days long past I sing.”†

It will be necessary to enter a little more minutely into the rites and ceremonies which accompanied this annual feast in the days of Shakspeare, and fortunately we can appeal to a few curious documents on which dependence can be placed. Hentzner, a learned German who travelled through Germany, England, France, and Italy, towards the close of the sixteenth century, and whose Itinerary, as far as it relates to this country, has been translated by the late Lord Orford, says,

“ As we were returning to our inn (from Windsor), we happened to meet some country people celebrating their harvest-home; their last load of corn they crown with flowers, having besides an image richly dressed, by which, perhaps, they would signify Ceres; this they keep moving about, while men and women, men and maid servants, riding through the streets in the cart, shout as loud as they can till they arrive at the barn.”‡ Dr. Moresin also, another foreigner, who published, in the reign of James I., an elaborate work on the “Origin and Increase of Depravity in Religion,” relates that he saw “in England the country people bringing home, in a cart from the harvest field, a figure made of corn, round which men and women were promiscuously singing, preceded by a piper and a drum.”§

To this custom of accompanying home the last waggon-load of corn, at the

* Tusser Redivivus, p. 104. In the first edition of Tusser, 1557, this stanza is as follows:—

“ Then welcome thy harvest folke, serveauntes and all:
with mirth and good chere, let them furnish the hall.
The harvest lorde nightly must give thee a song:
fill him then the blacke boll, or els he hath wrong.”

Reprint by Sir Egerton Bridges, p. 19.

† Bloomfield's Farmer's Boy, Summer, l. 299.

‡ Pauli Hentzner's Travels in England, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, translated by Horace, late Earl of Orford. Edit. of 1797. p. 55.

§ Anglos vidi spiceam ferre domum in Rheda Imaginem circum cantantibus promiscuè viris et foeminis, præcedente tibicine aut tympano.”—*Deprav. Rel. Orig. in verbo*, Vacina.

close of harvest, with music, Shakspeare is supposed to allude in the Merchant of Venice, where Lorenzo tells the musicians to pierce his mistress' ear with sweetest touches,

"And draw her home with music."*

It was usual also, not only to feast the men and women, but to reward likewise the boys and girls who were in any degree instrumental in getting in the harvest; accordingly Tusser humanely observes,

"Once ended thy harvest, let none be begilde,
please such as did please thee, man, woman and child :
Thus doing, with alwaie such helpe as they can,
thou winnest the praise of the labouring man;"†

an injunction which Mr. Hilman has further explained by subjoining to this stanza the following remark:—"Every one," says he, "that did any thing towards the Inning, must now have some reward, as ribbons, laces, rows of pins to boys and girls, if never so small, for their encouragement, and to be sure plumb-pudding."

The most minute account, however, which we can now any where meet with, of the ceremonies and rejoicings at Harvest-Home, as they existed during the prior part of the seventeenth century, and which we may justly consider as not deviating from those that accompanied the same festival in the reign of Elizabeth, is to be found among the poems of Robert Herrick, and will be valued, not exclusively for its striking illustration of the subject, but for its merit, likewise, as a descriptive piece.

"THE HOCK-CART, OR HARVEST-HOME.‡

Come, Sons of Summer, by whose toile
We are the Lords of wine and oile :
By whose tough labours, and rough hands,
We rip up first, then reap our lands.
Crown'd with the eares of corne, now come,
And, to the pipe, sing Harvest-home.
Come forth, my Lord, and see the cart
Drest up with all the country art.
See, here a Maukin, there a sheet,
As spotlesse pure, as it is sweet :
The horses, mares, and frisking fillies,
Clad, all, in linen, white as lillies.
The Harvest swaines, and wenches bound
For joy, to see the Hock-cart crown'd.
About the cart, heare, how the rout
Of rurall younglings raise the shout;
Pressing before, some coming after,
These with a shout, and these with laughter.
Some blesse the cart; some kisse the sheaves;
Some prank them up with oaken leaves :
Some crosse the till-horse; some with great
Devotion, stroak the home-borne wheat :
While other rustics, lesse attent
To prayers than to merriment,
Run after with their breeches rent.
Well, on, brave boyes, to your Lord's hearth,
Glitt'ring with fire; where, for your mirth,

Ye shall see first the large and cheefe
Foundation of your feast, fat beefe :
With upper stories, mutton, veale,
And bacon, which makes full the meale ;
With sev'ral dishes standing by,
As here a custard, there a pie,
And here all tempting frumentie.
And for to make the merry cheere,
If smirking wine be wanting here,
There's that, which drowns all care, stout beere ;
Which freely drink to your Lord's health,
Then to the plough, the commonwealth ;
Next to your flailles, your fanes, your fats ;
Then to the maids with wheaten hats ;
To the rough sickle, and crookt sythe,
Drink frolick boyes, till all be blythe.
Feed, and grow fat; and as ye eat,
Be mindfull, that the lab'ring neat,
As you, may have their fill of meat.
And know, besides, ye must revoke
The patient oxen unto the yoke,
And all goe back unto the plough
And harrow, though they're hang'd up now.
And, you must know, your Lord's word true,
Feed him ye must, whose food fills you.
And that this pleasure is like raine,
Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
But for to make it spring againe.§

We must not forget that, during the reign of Elizabeth, another feast-day fell to the lot of the husbandman, at the close of wheat-sowing, in October. This was

* Act v. sc. 1.

† Tusser Redivivus, p. 104.

‡ *Hock-cart*,—by this word is meant the high or rejoicing-cart, and was applied to the last load of corn, as typical of the close of harvest. Thus Hock-tide is derived from the Saxon *Hoah* tid, or high tide, and is expressive of the Height of festivity.

§ Hesperides, p. 113—115.

termed, from one of the chief articles provided for the table, The Seed-Cake, and is no where recorded so distinctly as by the agricultural muse of Tusser:—

“ Wife sometime this week, if the weather hold cleer,
An end of wheat-sowing, we make for this yeere :
Remember thou therefore, though I do it not,
the seed-cake, the pastries, and furmenty pot.” *

Proceeding with the year, and postponing the consideration of All Hallowmas to the chapter on superstitions, we reach the eleventh of November, or the festival of St. Martin, usually called Martinmas, or Martlemas, a day formerly devoted to feasting and conviviality, and on which a stock of salted provisions was laid in for the winter. This custom of killing cattle, swine, etc. and curing them against the approaching season, was, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, common everywhere, though now only partially observed in a few country-villages; for smoke-dried meat in those days was more generally relished than at present. We find Tusser, therefore, as might be expected, recommending this savoury diet; in one place saying to his farmer,—

“ For Easter, at Martilmas, hang up a beefe —
With that and the like, yer grasse beef come in,
thy folke shall look cheerely, when others look thin ;” †

and again,—

“ Martilmas beefe doth bear good tacke,
When countrey folke do dainties lacke ;” ‡

so, likewise, in “The Pinner of Wakefield,” in 1559,

“ A piece of beef hung up since Martlemas.”

Moresin tells us, in the reign of James I., that there were great rejoicings and feasting on this day throughout Europe, an assertion which is verified by the ancient Calendar of the church of Rome, where under the eleventh of November occur the following observations:—“Martinalia, Geniale Festum. Vina delibantur et defecantur. Vinalia veterum festum huc translatum. Bacchus in Martini figura.—The Martinalia, a genial feast. Wines are tasted of and drawn from the lees. The Vinalia, a feast of the Ancients, removed to this day. Bacchus in the figure of Martin.” § J. Boëmus Aubanus likewise informs us, as Mr. Brand remarks, “that in Franconia, there was a great deal of eating and drinking at this season; no one was so poor or niggardly that on the Feast of St. Martin had not his dish of the entrails either of oxen, swine, or calves. They drank, too, he says, very liberally of wine on the occasion.” **

In this country, merriment and good cheer were equally conspicuous on St. Martin's feast; the young danced and sang, and the old regaled themselves by the fire-side. A modern poet, who has beautifully copied the antique, under the somewhat stale pretence of discovering an ancient manuscript, presents us with a specimen of his manufacture of considerable merit, under the title of Martilmasse Daye; this, as being referred to the age of Elizabeth, and recording, with due attention to historical costume, the mirth and revelry which used formerly to distinguish this period, may be admitted here as a species of traditional evidence of no exceptionable kind. The poem, which is supposed to have been found at Norwich, at an ancient Hostelrie, whilst under repair, consists of six stanzas, two of which, however, though possessing poetical and descriptive point, we have omitted, as not referable to any peculiar observance of the day:—

* Tusser Redivivus, p. 81.

† Ibid. p. 147.

‡ Ibid. p. 77.

§ Brand on Bourne's Antiquities, p. 392, note edit. 1810.

** Ibid. p. 393, 394.

" It is the day of Martilmasse,
Cuppes of ale should freelie passe ;
What though Wynter has begunne
To push downe the summer sunne,
To our fire we can betake
And enjoie the cracklinge brake,
Never heedinge winter's face
On the day of Martilmasse.—

Some do the citie now frequent,
Where costlie shews and merriment
Do weare the vaporish ev'ninge out
With interlude and revelling rout ;
Such as did pleasure Englandes Queene
When here her royal Grace was seene,*
Yet will they not this day let passe,
The merrie day of Martilmasse.

Nel hath left her wool at home,
The Flanderkin hath stayed his loom, †
No beame doth swinge nor wheel go round
Upon Gurguntum's walled ground ; ‡
Where now no anchorite doth dwell
To rise and pray at Lenard's bell :
Martyn hath kicked at Balaam's ass,
So merrie be old Martilmasse.

When the dailie sportes be done,
Round the market crosse they runne,
Prentis laddes, and gallant blades,
Dancinge with their gamesome maids,
Till the beadel, stoute and sowre,
Shakes his bell, and calls the houre ;
Then farewell ladde and farewell lasse,
To' th' merry night of Martilmasse." **

Shakspeare has an allusion to this formerly convivial day in the Second Part of King Henry IV., where Poins, asking Bardolph after Falstaff, says : " How doth the Martlemas, your master ? " an epithet by which, as Johnson observes, he means the latter spring, or the old fellow with juvenile passions.

We have now to record the closing and certainly the greatest festival of the year, the celebration of Christmas, a period which our ancestors were accustomed to devote to hospitality on a very large scale, to the indulgence indeed of hilarity and good cheer for, at least, twelve days, and sometimes, especially among the lower ranks for six weeks.

Christmas was always ushered in by the due observance of its Eve, first in a religious and then in a festive point of view. Our forefathers, remarks Bourne, " when the common devotions of the Eve were over, and night was come on, were wont to light up candles of an uncommon size, which were called Christmas-candles, and to lay a log of wood upon the fire, which they termed a Yule-clog, or Christmas-block. These were to illuminate the house, and turn the night into day ; which custom, in some measure, is still kept up in the northern parts." ††

This mode of rejoicing, at the winter solstice, appears to have originated with the Danes and Pagan Saxons, and was intended to be emblematical of the return of the sun, and its increasing light and heat ; *gehol* or *Geol*, Angl. Sax. *Jel*, *Jul*, *Huil*, or *Yule*, Dan. Sax. Swed., implying the idea of revolution or of wheel, and not only designating, among these northern nations, the month of December,

* The magnificent reception of Queen Elizabeth at Norwich in 1578, has been recorded with great minuteness, in two tracts, by Bernard Goldingham and Thomas Churchyard the poet, which are reprinted in Mr. Nichols's *Progresses* ; these accounts are likewise incorporated by Abraham Fleming as a supplement to Holinshed, and will be found in the last edition of this chronicler, in vol. iv. p. 375. The pomp and pageantry which were exhibited during this regal visit were equally gorgeous, quaint, and operose ; " Order was taken there," says Churchyard, " that every day, for sixe dayes together, a shew of some strange device should be seene ; and the maior and aldermen appointed among themselves and their breethren, that no person reteyning to the Queene shoulde be unfeasted, or unbidden to dinner and supper, during the space of these sixe dayes : which order was well and wisely observed, and gained their citie more fame and credite, than they wot of ; for that courtesie of theirs shall remayne in perpetuall memorie, whiles the walles of their citie standeth."—Nichols's *Progresses of Q. Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 56.

† The wise policy of Elizabeth in establishing the Flemings in this country gave birth to our vast superiority in the woollen trade ; and the first pageant which met the eyes of Elizabeth on her entrance into Norwich was the *artizan-strangers* pageant, illustrative of the whole process of the manufactory, " a shewe which pleased her Majestie so greatly, as she particularly viewed the knitting and spinning of the children, perused the loombes, and noted the several workes and commodities which were made by these meanes."—Nichols's *Progresses*, vol. ii. p. 13

‡ Gurguntum, a fabulous kind of Briton, who is supposed to have built Norwich Castle ; in the procession which went out of Norwich to meet the Queen, on the 16th of August, 1578, was " one whiche represented King *Gurgunt*, some tyme king of Englande, whiche buylded the castle of Norwich, called Blanch Flowre, and layde de foundation of the citie. He was mounted upon a brave courser, and was thus furnished : his body armed, his bases of greene and white silke ; on his head a black velvet hat, with a pume of white feathers. There attended upon him three henchmen in white and greene ; one of them did beare his helmet, the seconde his tergat, the thirde his staffe."—Nichols's *Progresses*, vol. ii. p. 5, 6.

** The Cabinet, vol. ii. p. 75, 76.

†† Bourne's *Antiquities*, p. 172.

called Jul-Month, but the great feast also of this period. * On the introduction of Christianity, the illuminations of the Eve of Yule were continued as representative of the true light which was then ushered into the world, in the person of our Saviour, the Day spring from on High.

The ceremonies and festivities which were observed on Christmas-Eve during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which in some parts of the north have been partially continued, until within these last thirty years, consisted in bringing into the house, with much parade and with vocal and instrument harmony, the Yule or Christmas-block, a massy piece of fire-wood, frequently the enormous root of a tree, and which was usually supplied by the carpenter attached to the family. This being placed in the centre of the great hall, each of the family, in turn, sate down upon it, sung a Yule-Song, and drank to a merry Christmas and a happy new year. It was then placed on the large open hearth in the hall chimney, and, being lighted with the last year's brand, carefully preserved for this express purpose, the music again struck up, when the addition of fuel already inflamed expedited the process, and occasioned a brilliant conflagration. The family and their friends were then feasted with Yule-Dough or Yule-cakes, on which were impressed the figure of the child Jesus; and with bowls of frumenty, made from wheat cakes or creed wheat, boiled in milk, with sugar, nutmeg, etc. To these succeeded tankards of spiced ale, while preparations were usually going on among the domestics for the hospitalities of the succeeding day.

In the curious collection of Herrick is preserved a poem descriptive of some of these observances, and which was probably written for the express purpose of being sung during the kindling of the Yule-clog.

“ Come, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boyes,
The Christmas Log to the firing;
While my good Dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your hearts desiring.

With the last yeere's brand
Light the new block, and
For good success in his spending,

On your psalteries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the Log is a teending.†

Drink now the strong beere,
Cut the white loafe here, ‡
The while the meat is a shredding
For the rare mince-pie,
And the plums stand by
To fill the paste that's a kneading.” §

It was customary on this eve, likewise, to decorate the windows of every house, from the nobleman's seat to the cottage, with bay, laurel, ivy, and holly leaves, which were continued during the whole of the Christmas-holidays, and frequently until Candlemas. Stowe, in his Survey of London, particularly mentions this observance :—

“ Against the feast of Christmas,” every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holm, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeere afforded to be greene: The conduits and standards in the streetes were likewise garnished. Amongst the which, I read, that in the yeere 1444, by tempest of thunder and lightning, on the first of February at night, Paul's steeple was fired, but with great labour quenched, and toward the morning of Candlemas day, at the Leaden Hall in Cornhill, a standard of tree beeing set up in the midst of the pavement fast in the ground, nayled full of holme and ivy, for disport of Christmas to the people; was torne up, and cast down by the *malignant spirit* (as was thought), and the stones of the pavement all about were cast in the streetes, and into divers houses, so that the people were sore agast at the great tempests.” **

This custom, which still prevails in many parts of the kingdom, especially in our parish-churches, is probably founded on a very natural idea, that whatever is

* A great display of literature on the etymon of the word *Yule* will be found in the “Allegories Orientales” of M. Count de Gebelin, Paris, 1773.

† *Teending*, a word derived from the Saxon, means *kindling*.

‡ White-loafe, sometimes called at this period wastel-bread or cake, from the French *wastiaux*, pastry; implied white bread well or twice baked, and was considered as a delicacy.

§ *Hesperides*, p. 309, 310.

** Stowe's Survey of London, 4to. edit., 1618, p. 149, 150.

green, at this bleak season of the year, may be considered as emblematic of joy and victory, more particularly the laurel, which had been adopted by the Greeks and Romans, for this express purpose. That this was the opinion of our ancestors, and that they believed the malignant spirit was envious of, and interested in destroying these symbols of their triumph, appears from the passage just quoted from Stowe.

It has been, indeed, conjectured, that this mode of ornamenting churches and houses is either allusive to numerous figurative expressions in the prophetic Scriptures typical of Christ, as the Branch of Righteousness, or that it was commemorative of the style in which the first Christian churches in this country were built, the materials for the erection of which being usually wrythen wands or boughs; * it may have, however, an origin still more remote, and fancy may trace the misletoe, which is frequently used on these occasions, to the times of the ancient Druids, an hypothesis which acquires some probability from a passage in Dr. Chandler's Travels in Greece, where he informs us,

“It is related where Druidism prevailed, the houses were decked with evergreens in December, that the Sylvan spirits might repair to them, and remain unnipped with frost and cold winds, until a milder season had renewed the foliage of their darling abodes.” †

The morning of the Nativity was ushered in with the chaunting of Christmas Carols, or Pious Chansons. The Christmas Carol was either scriptural or convivial, the first being sung morning and evening, until the twelfth day, and the second during the period of feasting or carousing.

“As soon as the morning of the Nativity appears,” says Bourne, “it is customary among the common people to sing a Christmas Carol, which is a song upon the birth of our Saviour, and generally sung from the Nativity to the Twelfth-day; this custom,” he adds, “seems to be an imitation of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, or Glory be to God on High, &c. which was sung by the angels, as they hovered o’er the fields of Bethlehem on the morning of the Nativity; for even that song, as the learned Bishop Taylor observes, was a Christmas Carol. ‘As soon,’ says he, ‘as these blessed Choristers had sung their Xmas Carol, and taught the Church a hymn, to put into her offices for ever, on the anniversary of this festivity, the angels,’ &c. ‡

We can well remember that, during the early period of our life, which was spent in the north of England, it was in general use for the young people to sing a *carol* early on the morning of this great festival, and the burthen of which was,

“All the angels in heaven do sing
On a Christmas day in the morning;”

customs such as this, laudable in themselves and highly impressive on the youthful mind, are, we are sorry to say, nearly, if not totally, disappearing from the present generation.

To the carols, hymns, or pious chansons, which were sung about the streets at night, during Christmas-tide, Shakspeare has two allusions; one in Hamlet, where the Prince quotes two lines from a popular ballad entitled “The Songe of Jephthah’s Daughter,” and adds, “The first row of the pious chanson will show you more;” § and the other in the Midsummer-Night’s Dream, where Titania remarks that

“No night is now with hymn or carol blest.”

Upon the first of these passages Mr. Steevens has observed that the “pious chansons were a kind of Christmas carols, containing some scriptural history thrown into loose rhymes, and sung about the streets by the common people;” and upon the second, that “hymns and carols, in the time of Shakspeare, during the season of Christmas, were sung every night about the streets, as a pretext for collecting money from house to house.”

* Vide Gentleman’s Magazine for 1765.

† Brand on Bourne’s Antiquities, p. 200, 201.

** Act ii. sc. 2.

‡ Brand on Bourne’s Antiquities, p. 193.

§ Act ii. sc. 2.

Carols of this kind, indeed, were, during the sixteenth century, sung at Christmas, through every town and village in the kingdom; and Tusser, in his "Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie," introduces one for this season, which he orders to be sung to the tune of King Salomon. *

The chief object of the common people in chaunting these nightly carols, from house to house, was to obtain money or Christmas-Boxes, a term derived from the usage of the Romish priests, who ordered masses at this time to be made to the Saints, in order to atone for the excesses of the people, during the festival of the Nativity, and as these masses were always purchased of the priest, the poor were allowed to gather money in this way with the view of liberating themselves from the consequence of the debaucheries of which they were enabled to partake, through the hospitality of the rich.

The convivial or jolie carols were those which were sung either by the company, or by itinerant minstrels, during the revelry that daily took place, in the houses of the wealthy, from Christmas-Eve to Twelfth Day. They were also frequently called Wassel Songs, and may be traced back to the Anglo-Norman period. Mr. Douce, in his very interesting "Illustrations of Shakspeare and of Ancient Manners," has given us a Christmas-carol of the thirteenth or fourteenth century written in the Norman language, and which may be regarded, says he, "as the most ancient drinking song, composed in England, that is extant. This singular curiosity," he adds, "has been written on a spare leaf in the middle of a valuable miscellaneous manuscript of the fourteenth century, preserved in the British Museum, Bibl. Regal. 16, E. 8."† To the original he has annexed a translation, admirable for its fidelity and harmony, and we are tempted to insert three stanzas as illustrative of manners and diet which still continued fashionable in the days of Shakspeare. We shall prefix the first stanza of the original, as a specimen of the language, with the observation, that from the word *Noel*, which occurs in it, Blount has derived the terms *Ule* or *Yule*; the French *Nouël* or Christmas, he observes, the Normans corrupted to *Nuel*, and from *Nuel*, we had *Nule*, or *Ule*.‡

" Seignors ore entendez a nus,
De loinz sumes renuz a wous,
Pur quere NOEL;
Car lem nus dit que en cest hostel
Soleit tenir sa feste anuel
A hi cest jur."

" Lordings, from a distant home,
To seek old Christmas we are come,
Who loves our minstrelsy:
And here, unless report mis-say,
The grey-beard dwells; and on this day
Keeps yearly wassel, ever gay,
With festive mirth and glee.

Lordings, list, for we tell you true;
Christmas loves the jolly crew

That cloudy care defy:
His liberal board is deftly spread
With manchet loaves and wastel-bread;
His guests with fish and flesh are fed,
Nor lack the stately pye.

Lordings, it is our host's command,
And Christmas joins him hand in hand,
To drain the brimming bowl:
And I'll be foremost to obey:
Then pledge me, sirs, and drink away,
For Christmas revels here to-day
And sways without controul.
Now Wassel to you all! and merry may ye be!
But foul that wight befall, who drinks not
Health to me!"§

Manchet loaves, wassel-bread, and the stately pye, that is, a peacock or pheasant pye, were still common in the days of Shakspeare. During the prevalence of chivalry, it was usual for the knights to take their vows of enterprise, at a solemn feast, on the presentation to each knight, in turn, of a roasted peacock in a golden dish. For this was afterwards substituted, though only in a culinary light, and as the most magnificent dish which could be brought to table, a peacock in a pie, preserving as much as possible the form of the bird, with the head elevated above the crust, the beak richly gilt, and the beautiful tail spread out to its full

* Chap. xxx. fol. 57. edit. 1586.

† Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 214.

‡ Vide Blount's Ancient Tenure of Land, and Jocular Customs of some Manors. Beckwith's edit. 8vo. 1784.

§ Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 215—217. 219.



extent. In allusion to these superb dishes a ludicrous oath was prevalent in Shakspeare's time, which he has, with much propriety, put into the mouth of Justice Shallow, who, soliciting the stay of the fat knight, exclaims,

"By cock and pye, sir, you shall not away to night."*

The use of the peacock, however, as one of the articles of a second course, continued to the close of the seventeenth century; for Gervase Markham, in the ninth edition of his *English House-Wife*, London 1683, enumerating the articles and ordering of a great feast, mentions this among other birds, now seldom seen as objects of cookery; "then in the second course she shall first preferre the lesser wild-fowl, as etc. then the lesser land-fowl, as etc. etc. then the great wild-fowl, as bittern, hearn, shoveler, crane, bustard, and such like. Then the greater land-fowl, as PEACOCKS, phesant, puets, gulls, etc."†

Numerous collections of Carols, or festal chansons, to be sung at the various feasts and ceremonies of the Christmas-holidays, were published during the sixteenth century. One of the earliest of these was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521, and entitled "*Christmasse carolles*." It contains, among many very curious specimens of this species of popular poetry, one which not only contributed to the hilarity of our ancestors in the reigns of Henry, Elizabeth, and James, but is still in use, though with many alterations, in Queen's College, Oxford; it is designated as "a Carol bryngyng in the bores head," which was the first dish served up at the baron's high table in the great hall on Christmas-day, and was usually accompanied by a procession, with the sound of trumpets and other instruments.

"*Caput Apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.*

The bores head in hande bringe I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary.
I pray you all synge merily,
Qui estis in convivio.

The bores head, I understande,
Is the chefe servyce in this lande:
Loke wherever it be fande
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladde lordes, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde
To chere you all this christmasse,
The bores head with mustarde."‡

For the hospitality, indeed, the merriment and good cheer, which prevailed during the season of Christmas, this country was peculiarly distinguished in the sixteenth century. Setting aside the splendid manner in which this festival was kept at court, and in the capital, we may appeal to the country, in confirmation of the assertion; the hall of the nobleman and country-gentleman, and even the humbler mansions of the yeoman and husbandman, vied with the city in the exhibition of plenty, revelry, and sport. Of the mode in which the farmer and his servants enjoyed themselves, on this occasion, a good idea may be formed from the poem of Tusser, the first edition of which thus admonishes the housewife:—

"Get ivye and hull, woman deck up thyne house:
and take this same brawne, for to seeth and to souse.
Provide us good chere, for thou know'st the old guise:
olde customes, that good be, let no man despise.

* Act v. sc. 1.

† *English House-Wife*, p. 99. The pies which he recommends immediately subsequent to this enumeration are somewhat curious, and rather of a more substantial nature than those of modern days; for instance, red-deer pye, gammon of bacon pye, wild-bore pye, and roe-pye.

‡ Vide Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 143.

At Christmas be mery, and thanke god of all
and feast thy pore neighbours, the great with the small.*

And in subsequent impressions, the articles of the "Christmas husbandlie fare" are more particularly enumerated; for instance, good drinke, a blazing fire in the hall, brawne, pudding and souse, and mustard with all, beef, mutton, and pork, shred or minced pies of the best, pig, veal, goose, capon, and turkey, cheese, apples, and nuts, with jolie carols; a pretty ample provision for the rites of hospitality, and a powerful security against the inclemencies of the season!

The Hall of the baron, knight, or squire, was the seat of the same festivities, the same gambols, wassalling, mummary, and mirth, which usually took place in the palaces and mansions of the metropolis, and of these Jonson has given us a very curious epitome in his "Masque of Christmas," where he has personified the season and its attributes in the following manner:

"Enter CHRISTMAS with two or three of the Guard.

"He is attir'd in round hose, long stockings, a close doublet, a high crownd hat with a broach, a long thin beard, a truncheon, little ruffles, white shoes, his scarffes and garters tyed crosse, and his drum beaten before him.—

"The names of his CHILDREN, with their attyres.

"*Mis-rule.* In a velvet cap with a sprig, a short cloake, great yellow ruffe like a reveller, his torch-bearer bearing a rope, a cheese and a basket.

"*Caroll.* A long tawny coat, with a red cap, and a flute at his girdle, his torch-bearer carrying a song booke open.

"*Minc'd Pie.* Like a fine cooke's wife, drest neat; her man carrying a pie, dish, and spoones.

"*Gamboll.* Like a tumbler, with a hoope and bells; his torch-bearer arm'd with a cole-staffe, and a blinding cloth.

"*Post And Paire.* With a paire-royall of aces in his hat; his garment all done over with payres, and purrs; his squier carrying a box, cards and counters.

"*New-Yeares-Gift.* In a blew coat, serving-man like, with an orange, and a sprig of rosemarie guilt on his head, his hat full of broaches, with a collar of gingerbread, his torch-bearer carrying a march-paine, with a bottle of wine on either arme.

"*Mumming.* In a masquing pied suite, with a visor, his torch-bearer carrying the boxe, and ringing it.

"*Wassall.* Like a neat sempster, and songster; her page bearing a browne bowle, drest with ribbands, and rosemarie before her.

"*Offering.* In a short gowne, with a porter's staffe in his hand; a wyth borne before him, and a bason by his torch-bearer,

"*Babie-Coche.* Drest like a boy, in a fine long coat, biggin, bib, muckender, and a little dagger; his usher bearing a great cake with a beane, and a pease."†

Of these personified attributes we have already noticed, at some length, the most material, such as Misrule, Caroll, New-Year's-Gift and Wassall; to the account, however, which has been given of the Summer Lord of Misrule, from Stubbes's "Anatomie of Abuses," it will be here necessary to add, that the sway of this mock prince, both in town and country, was still more absolute during the Christmas-holiday; "what time," says Holinshed, "of old ordinarie course there is alwaies one appointed to make sport in the court, called commonlie Lord of Misrule: whose office is not unknowne to such as have beene brought up in noblemen's houses, and among great housekeepers, which use liberal feasting in that season."‡ Stowe, likewise, has recorded, in his Survey, the universal domination of this holiday monarch.

"In the feast of Christmas," he remarks, "there was in the king's house, wheresoever he was lodged, a Lord of Misrule, or Master of merry Desports, and the like had yee in the house of

* A hundreth good poyntes of husbandry, 1557. p. 10.

† Christmas, His Masque; as it was presented at Court 1616. Jonson's Works, folio edit. 1640, vol. ii.

‡ Holinshed's Chronicles, vol. iii. p. 1032. edit. 1808.

every nobleman of honour, or good worship, were he spirituall or temporall. Amongst the which, the Maior of London, and either of the Sheriffes had their several Lords of Misrule, ever contending without quarrell or offence, who should make the rarest pastimes to delight the beholders. These Lords beginning their rule on Alhallow Eve, continued the same til the morrow after the feast of the Purification, commonly called Candlemas-day: In all which space, there were fine and subtill disguisings, maskes and mummeries, with playing at cardes for counters, nayles and points in every house, more for pastime than for gaine.”*

In short, the directions which are to be found for a grand Christmas in the capital, were copied with equal splendour and profusion in the houses of the opulent gentlemen in the country, who made it a point to be even lavish at this season of the year. We may, therefore, consider the following description as applying accurately to the Christmas hospitality of the Baron’s hall.

“ On Christmas-day, service in the church ended, the gentlemen presently repair into the hall to breakfast, with brawn, mustard, and malmsey.

“ At dinner the butler, appointed for the Christmas, is to see the tables covered and furnished: and the ordinary butlers of the house are decently to set bread, napkins, and trenchers, in good form, at every table; with spoones and knives. At the first course is served in a fair and large bore’s head, upon a silver platter, wth minstralsye.

“ Two ‘servants’ are to attend at supper, and to bear two fair torches of wax, next before the musicians and trumpeters, and stand above the fire with the music, till the first course be served in through the hall. Which performed, they, with the music, are to return into the buttery. The like course is to be observed in all things, during the time of Christmas.

“ At night, before supper, are revels and dancing, and so also after supper, during the twelve daies of Christmas. The Master of the Revels is, after dinner and supper, to sing a caroll, or song; and command other gentlemen then there present to sing with him and the company; and so it is very decently performed.”†

Beside the revelry and dancing here mentioned, we may add, that it was customary, at this season, after the Christmas sports and games had been indulged in, until the performers were weary, to gather round the ruddy fire, and tell tales of legendary lore, or popular superstition. Herrick, recording the diversions of this period, mentions one of them as consisting of “winter’s tales about the hearth;”‡ and Grose, speaking of the source whence he had derived many of the superstitions narrated in the concluding section of his “Provincial Glossary,” says, that he gives them, as they had, from age to age, been “related to a closing circle of attentive hearers, assembled in a winter’s evening, round the capacious chimney of an old hall or manor-house;” and he adds, that tales of this description formed, among our ancestors, “a principal part of rural conversation, in all large assemblies, and particularly those in Christmas holidays, during the burning of the Yule-block.”§

Of the conviviality which universally reigned during these holidays, a good estimate may be taken by a few lines from the author of *Hesperides*, who, addressing a friend at Christmas-tide, makes the following request:

————— “When your faces shine
With bucksome meat and cap’ring wine,
Remember us in cups full crown’d,—
Untill the fired chesnuts leape
For joy, to see the fruits ye reape
From the plumpe chalice, and the cup,
That tempts till it be tossed up:—

————— carouse
Till Liber Pater** twirles the house
About your eares;—
“Then” to the bagpipe all addresse,
Till sleep takes place of wearinesse:
And thus throughout, with Christmas playes,
Frolick the full twelve holy-dayes.”††

* Stowe’s Survey of London, p. 149. edit. 1618.

† Nichols’s Progresses and Processions of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. p. 20, 21. Anno 1562.

‡ *Hesperides*, p. 145.

§ Provincial Glossary, Preface, p. 8. 8vo. 1787.

** *Liber Pater*, Bacchus.

†† *Hesperides*, p. 146. The following passages place in a strong and interesting point of view, the hospitality of our ancestors during this season of the year, and will add not a little to the impression derived from the text.

“Heretofore, noblemen and gentlemen of fair estates had their heralds who wore their coate of armes at Christmas, and at other solemne times, and cryed largesse thrice. They lived in the country like petty kings. They always eat in Gothic Halls where the Mummings and Loaf-stealing, and other Christmas

We shall close this detail of the ceremonies and festivities of Christmas with a passage from the descriptive muse of Sir Walter Scott, in which he has collected, with his usual accuracy, and with his almost unequalled power of costume-painting, nearly all the striking circumstances which distinguished the celebration of this high festival, from an early period to the close of the sixteenth century. They form a picture which must delight, both from the nature of its subject, and from the truth and mellowness of its colouring.

— “ Well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night :
On Christmas eve the bells were rung ;—
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen ;
The hall was dressed with holly green ;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the misletoe.
Then opened wide the baron’s hall
To vassal, tenant, serf and all ;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner chuse ;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of “ post and pair.”
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire with well dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide ;
The huge hall-table’s oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,

By old blue-coated serving-man ;
Then the grim boar’s-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell ;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassal round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked : hard by
Plumb-porridge stood, and Christmas pye ;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savoury goose.
Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din ;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery ;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made ;
But, O ! what masquers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light !
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
’Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale ;
’Twas Christmas told the merriest tale ;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man’s heart through half the year.”*

sports, were performed. The hearth was commonly in the middle ; whence the saying, round about our coal-fire.” *Antiquarian Repertory*, No. xxvi. from the MS. Collections of Aubrey, dated 1678.

“ An English Gentleman at the opening of the great day, *i. e.* on Christmas Day in the morning, had all his tenants and neighbours entered his Hall by day-break. The strong beer was broached, and the black-jacks went plentifully about with toast, sugar, nutmegg, and good Cheshire cheese. The Hackin (the great sausage) must be boiled by day-break, or else two young men must take the maiden (*i. e.* the cook), by the arms and run her round the market place till she is ashamed of her laziness.

“ In Christmass Holidays, the tables were all spread from the first to the last ; the sirloins of beef, the minced pies, the plumb-porridge, the capons, turkeys, geese, and plumb-puddings, were all brought upon the board : every one eat heartily, and was welcome, which gave rise to the proverb, ‘ Merry in the hall when beards wag all.’ From a Tract entitled “ Round about our Coal-Fire, or Christmas Entertainments ;” of which the first edition was published, I believe, about the close of the seventeenth century.

“ Our ancestors considered Christmas in the double light of a holy commemoration and a cheerful festival ; and accordingly distinguished it by devotion, by vacation from business, by merriment and hospitality. They seemed eagerly bent to make themselves and every body about them happy.—The great hall resounded with the tumultuous joys of servants and tenants, and the gambols they played served as amusement to the lord of the mansion and his family, who, by encouraging every art conducive to mirth and entertainment, endeavoured to soften the rigour of the season, and mitigate the influence of winter.”—*The World*, No. 104.

* Scott’s *Marmion*. Introduction to Canto Sixth. 8vo. edit. p. 300—303.

“ At present, Christmas meetings,” remarks Mr. Brady, “ are chiefly confined to family parties, happy, it must be confessed, though less jovial in their nature ; perhaps, too, less beneficial to society, because they can be enjoyed on other days not, as originally was the case, set apart for more general conviviality and sociability ; not such as our old ballads proclaim, and history confirms, in which the most frigid tempers gave way to relaxation, and all in eager joy were ready to exclaim, in honour of the festivity,—

“ For, since such delights are thine,
CHRISTMAS, with thy bands I join.” *Clavis Calendaria*, vol. ii. p. 319.

CHAPTER VII.

Manners and Customs of the Country continued—Wakes—Fairs—Weddings—Burials.

HAVING described, in as brief a manner as was consistent with the nature of our work, the various circumstances accompanying the celebration of the most remarkable holidays and festivals, in the country, during the age of Shakspeare, from whose inimitable compositions we have drawn many pertinent illustrations on nearly all the subjects as they passed before us ; we shall proceed, in the present chapter, to notice those remaining topics which are calculated to complete, on the scale adopted, a tolerably correct view of rural manners and customs, as they existed in the latter half of the sixteenth, and prior portion of the seventeenth, century.

A natural transition will carry us, from the description of the rural festival, to the gaieties of the Wake or Fair. Of these terms, indeed, the former originally implied the vigil which preceded the festival in honour of the Saint to whom the parish-church was dedicated ; for “on the Eve of this day,” remarks Mr. Borlase, in his Cornwall, “prayers were said, and hymns were sung all night in the church ; and from these watchings the festivals were stiled Wakes ; which name still continues in many parts of England, though the vigils have been long abolished.”* The religious institution, however, of the Wake, whether held on the vigil or Saint’s day, was soon forgotten ; mirth and feasting early became the chief objects of this meeting,† and it, at length, degenerated into something approaching towards a secular Fair. These Wakes or Fairs, which were rendered more popular in proportion as they deviated from their devotional origin, were, until the reign of Henry the Sixth, always held on a Sunday and its eve, a custom that continued to be partially observed as late as the middle of the seventeenth century ; hence ale-houses, and places of public resort, in the immediate neighbourhood of church-yards, the former scene of Wakes, were still common at the close of Shakspeare’s life ; thus Sir Thomas Overbury, describing a Sexton, in his “Characters,” published in 1616, says : “At every church-style commonly there’s an ale-house ; where let him (the Sexton) bee found never so idle-pated, hee is still a grave drunkard.”

The increasing licentiousness and conviviality, however, which attended these church-yard assemblies, frequented as they were by pedlars and hawkers of every description, finally occasioned their suppression in all places, at least, where much traffic was expected. In their room regular Fairs were established, to which in central or peculiar stations, the resort, at fixed periods, was immense.

Yet the Wake, the meeting for mere festivity and frolic, still continued in every village and small town, and though not preceded by any vigil in the church, was popularly termed the Wake-Day. Tusser, in his catalogue of the “Old

* Brand on Bourne’s Antiquities, p. 333.

† Mr. Strutt, in a quotation from an old MS. legend of St. John the Baptist, preserved in Dugdale’s Warwickshire, tells us,—“In the beginning of holi churche, it was so that the pepul cam to the chirche with candellys brinnyng, and wold *wake* and comme with Light toward the chirche in their devociions, and after they fell to lecherie and songs, daunces, harping, piping, and also to glotony and sinne, &c.”—Sports and Pastimes, p. 322.

“It appears,” says Mr. Brand, “that in ancient times the parishioners brought *rushes* at the Feast of Dedication, wherewith to strew the Church, and from that circumstance the Festivity itself has obtained the name of *Rushbearing*, which occurs for a Country-Wake in a Glossary to the Lancashire dialect.” Brand ap. Ellis, vol. i. p. 436.

Guise," has not forgotten this season of merriment ; on the contrary, he seems to welcome its return with much cordiality :—

" Fil oven ful of flawnes, Ginnie passe not for sleepe,
to morrow thy father his wake-daie wil keepe :
Then every wanton may danse at hir wil,
both Tomkin and Tomlin, and Jankin with Gil." *

Mr. Hilman, in his edition of Tusser, has made the following observations on this passage. — " Waking in the church," says he, " was left off because of some abuses, and we see here it was converted to wakeing at the oven. The other continued down to our author's days, and in a great many places continues still to be observed with all sorts of rural merriments; such as dancing, wrestling, cudgel-playing, etc." Bourne observes, that the feasting and sporting, on this occasion, usually lasted for two or three days; † and Bishop Hall gives an impressive idea of the revelry and glee which distinguished these rural assemblages, when he exclaims, " What should I speak of our merry Wakes, and May games—in all which put together, you may well say, no Greek can be merrier than they. ‡ Indeed from one end of the kingdom to the other, from north to south, it would appear, that, among the country-villages, during the reigns of Elizabeth and her two immediate successors, Wakes formed one of the principal amusements of the peasantry, and were anticipated with much eagerness and expectation. In confirmation of this we need only remark that Drayton, speaking of Lancashire, declares, that

— " every village smokes at wakes with lusty cheer ;" §

and that Herrick, in Devonshire, has written a very curious little poem, " The Wake," which, as strikingly descriptive of the various business of this festivity, claims here an introduction :—

" Come Anthea, let us two
Go to feast, as others do.
Tarts and custards, creams and cakes,
Are the junketts still at Wakes :
Unto which the tribes resort,
Where the businesse is the sport :
Morris-dancers thou shalt see,
Marian too in pagentrie :
And a Mimick to devise
Many grinning properties.
Players there will be, and those
Base in action as in clothes :

Yet with strutting they will please
The incurious villages.
Neer the dying of the day,
There will be a cudgell play,
Where a coxcomb will be broke,
Ere a good *word* can be spoke :
But the anger ends all here,
Drencht in ale, or drown'd in beere.
Happy Rusticks, best content
With the cheapest merriment :
And possesse no other feare,
Than to want the *Wake* next yeare." **

Of the pedlars or hawkers who, in general, formed a constituent part of these village-wakes, an accurate idea may be drawn from the character of the pedlar Autolycus, in the Winter's Tale of Shakspeare, who is delineated with the poet's customary strength of pencil, rich humour, and fidelity to nature. The wares in which he dealt are curiously enumerated in the following passages :—

" *Serv.* He hath songs, for men, or women, of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves : †† he has the prettiest love-songs for maids; he hath ribands of all the colours i' the rainbow; points more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle, though they come to him by the gross; ‡‡ inkles, caddisses, cambricks, lawns : why, he sings them over, as they were gods or goddesses: you would think, a smock were a she-angel; he so chants to the sleeve-hand, and the work about the square on't.
Act. iv. sc. 3.

" *Enter Autolycus, singing.*

" Lawn, as white as driven snow;
Cyprus, black as e'er was crow;

* Hilman's Tusser, p. 81.

† Triumph of Pleasure, p. 23.

§ Chalmers's Poets, vol. iv. p. 378. Poly-Olbion, Song xxvii.

† Bourne's Antiquit. Vulg. p. 330.

** Hesperides, p. 300, 301.

†† In Shakspeare's time the business of the milliner was transacted by men.

‡‡ *Caddisses*,—a kind of narrow worsted galloon.

Gloves as sweet as damask roses;
 Masks for faces, and for noses;
 Bugle bracelet, necklace-amber,
 Perfume for a lady's chamber:
 Golden quoifs, and stomachers,
 For my lads to give their dears;
 Pins and poking-sticks of steel,
 What maids lack from head to heel:
 Come, buy of me, come; come buy, come buy;
 Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry:
 Come buy, &c."

Act. iv. sc. 3.

At the close of the feast Autolycus is represented as re-entering, and declaring "Ha, ha! what a fool honesty is! and trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman! I have sold all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander*, brooch, table-book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tye, bracelet, horn-ring, to keep my pack from fasting: they throng who should buy first; as if my trinkets had been hallowed, and brought a benediction to the buyer."†

In the North, the Village-Wake is still kept up, under the title of The Hopping, a word derived from the Anglo-Saxon, and thus applied, because dancing was the favourite amusement of these meetings. The reign of Elizabeth, indeed, was marked by a peculiar propensity to this exercise, and neither wake nor feast could be properly celebrated without the country lads and lasses footing it on the green or yard, or in bad weather, in the Manor-hall.

In an old play, entitled "A Woman Killed With Kindness," the production of Thomas Heywood, and acted in 1604, is to be found a very humorous description of one of these Hoppings, and particularly curious, as it enumerates the names of the dances then in vogue among these rustic performers. The poet, after remarking that now

" the mad lads
 And country lasses, every mother's child,
 With nosegays and bride laces in their hats,
 Dance all their country measures, rounds and jigs,"

thus introduces his couples:

"*Jenkin.* Come, Nick, take you Joan Miniver to trace withal; Jack Slime, traverse you with Sisly Milk-pail; I will take Jane Trubkin, and Roger Brickbat shall have Isabel Motley; and now strike up; we'll have a crash here in the yard.—

Jack Slime. Foot it quickly; if the music overcome not my melancholy, I shall quarrel; and if they do not suddenly strike up, I shall presently strike them down.

Jen. No quarrelling, for God's sake: truly, if you do, I shall set a knave between ye.

Jack Slime. I come to dance, not to quarrel; come, what shall it be? Rogero?

Jen. Rogero! no; we will dance 'The beginning of the World.'

Sisly. I love no dance so well, as 'John, come kiss me now.'

Nicholas. I have ere now deserved a cushion; call for the Cushion-dance.

R. Brick. For my part, I like nothing so well as 'Tom Tyler.'

Jen. No; we'll have 'The hunting of the Fox.'

Jack Slime. 'The Hay! the Hay!' there's nothing like 'The Hay.'

Nich. I have said, do say, and will say again.

Jen. Every man agree to have it as Nick says.

All. Content.

Nich. It hath been, it now is, and it shall be.

Sisly. What? Mr. Nicholas? What?

Nich. 'Put on your smock a Monday.'

Jen. So, the dance will come cleanly off: come, for God's sake, agree of something; if you like not that, put it to the musicians; or let me speak for all, and we'll have 'Sellenger's Round.'

All. That, that, that!

Nich. No, I am resolved, thus it shall be. First take hands, then take ye to your heels.

* *Pomander*,—a little ball of perfumes worn either in the pocket or about the neck.

† Act. iv. sc. iii.

Jen. Why, would you have us run away?

Nich. No; but I would have you shake your heels. Music, strike up.

*They dance.**

The Fair or greater wake was usually held, as hath been observed, in a central situation, and its period and duration were, as at present, proclaimed by law. It was a scene of extensive business as well as of pleasure; for before provincial cities had attained either wealth or consequence, all communication between them was difficult, and neither the necessaries nor the elegances of life could be procured but at stated times, and at fixed depôts. It was usual, therefore, to go fifty or a hundred miles to one of these fairs, in order both to purchase goods and accommodations for the ensuing year, and to dispose of the superfluous products of art or cultivation. In the reign of Henry VI. the monks of the priories of Maxtoke in Warwickshire, and of Bicester in Oxfordshire, laid in their annual stores of common necessaries at Sturbridge Fair in Cambridgeshire, at least one hundred miles distant, and notwithstanding the two cities of Oxford and Coventry were in their immediate neighbourhood.† In the reign of Henry VIII., it appears, from the Household-Book of Henry Percy, fifth Earl of Northumberland, that his Lordship's family were supplied with necessaries for the whole year from fairs. "He that stands charged with my Lordes House for the houll Yeir, if he maye possible, shall be at all Faïres, where the greice Emptions shall be boughte for the House, for the houll Yeir, as Wine, Wax, Beïffes, Muttons, Wheite and Malt;"‡ and, in the reign of Elizabeth, Tusser recommends to his farmer the same plan, both for purchase and sale :

"At Bartilmewtide, or at Sturbridge faire,
buie that as is needful, thy house to repaire :
Then sel to thy profit, both butter and cheese,
who buieth it sooner, the more he shall leese." §

That this custom prevailed until the commencement of the eighteenth century, and to nearly the same extent, is evident from a note on the just quoted lines of Tusser by Mr. Hilman. "Sturbridge fair," says he, "stocks the country (namely, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex) with clothes, and all other houshold necessaries, and (the farmers) again, sell their butter and cheese, and whatever else remains on their hands; nay, there the shopkeepers supply themselves with divers sorts of commodities."

In the third year, indeed, of James I., Sturbridge Fair began to acquire such celebrity, that hackney coaches attended it from London; and it subsequently became so extensive that for several years not less than sixty coaches have been known to ply at this fair, then esteemed the largest in England.

Sturbridge Fair is still annually proclaimed, but now in such a state of decline, that its extinction, at least in a commercial light, cannot be far distant.

To these brief notices of wakes and fairs, it may be necessary to subjoin a slight detail of the state of Country-Inns and Ale-houses during the age of Shakspeare.

To "take mine ease in mine inn" is a proverbial phrase, which the poet has placed in the mouth of Falstaff, and which implies a degree of comfort which has always been the peculiar attribute of an English house of public entertainment.

That it was not less felt and enjoyed in Shakspeare's time than in our own, is very apparent from the accounts which have been left us by Harrison and Fynes Moryson; the former writing towards the close of the sixteenth, and the latter at the commencement of the seventeenth century. These descriptions, which are curiously faithful and highly interesting, paint the provincial hostelries of England

* Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 435, 436. The third edition of "A Woman Killed With Kindness," was printed in 4to. 1617.

† Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 279. note.

‡ Establishment and Expences of the Household of Henry Percy, the fifth Earl of Northumberland, A.D. 1512. p. 407.

§ Hilman's Tusser, p. 110.

as in a most flourishing state, and, according to Harrison, indeed, greatly superior to those which existed in the metropolis.

“Those townes,” says the historian, “that we call thorowfares, have great and sumptuous innes builded in them, for the receiving of such travellers and strangers as passe to and fro. The manner of harbouring wherein, is not like to that of some other countries, in which the host or goodman of the house dooth challenge a lordlie authorite over his ghests, but clean otherwise, sith every man may use his inne as his owne house in England, and have for his monie how great or little varietie of vittels, and what other service himselfe shall thinke expedient to call for. Our innes are also verie well furnished with naperie, bedding, and tapisserie, especiallie with naperie: for beside the linnen used at the tables, which is commonlie washed dailie, is such and so much as belongeth unto the estate and calling of the ghest. Ech commer is sure to lie in cleane sheets, wherein no man hath beene lodged since they came from the landresse, or out of the water wherein they were last washed. If the traveller have an horsse, his bed dooth cost him nothing, but if he go on foote he is sure to paie a penie for the same: but whether he be horsseman or footman if his chamber be once appointed he may carie the kaie with him, as of his owne house so long as he lodgeth there. If he loose oughts whilst he abideth in the inne, the host is bound by a generall custome to restore the damage, so that there is no greater securitie anie where for travellers than in the gretest ins of England.” He then, after enumerating the depredations to which travellers are subject on the road, completes the picture by the following additional touches. “In all innes we have plentie of ale, biere, and sundrie kinds of wine, and such is the capacitie of some of them, that they are able to lodge two hundred or three hundred persons, and their horssees at ease, and thereto with a verie short warning make such provision for their diet, as to him that is unacquainted withall may seeme to be incredible. And it is a world to see how ech owner of them contendeth with other for goodnesse of interteinment of their ghests, as about finesse and change of linnen, furniture of bedding, beautie of rooms, service at the table, costliness of plate, strength of drinke, varietie of wines, or well using of horssees. Finallie there is not so much omitted among them as the gorgeouslynes of their verie signes at their doores, wherein some doo consume thirtie or fortie pounds, a meere vanitie in mine opinion, but so vaine will they needs be, and that not onelie to give some outward token of the inne keeper’s welth, but also to procure good ghests to the frequenting of their houses, in hope there to be well used.” *

“As soone as a passenger comes to an inne,” remarks Moryson, “the servants run to him, and one takes his horse and walkes him till he be cold, then rubs him down, and gives him meat. Another servant gives the passenger his private chamber, and kindles his fire; the third pulls off his bootes and makes them cleane; then the host or hostess visits him; and if he will eate with the hoste, or at a common table with others, his meale will cost him sixpence, or in some places but four-pence; but if he will eate in his chamber he commands what meate he will according to his appetite; yea the kitchin is open to him to order the meate to be dressed as he likes beste. After having eaten what he pleases, he may, with credit, set by a part for the next day’s breakfast. His bill will then be written for him, and, should he object to any charge, the host is ready to alter it” †

Taverns and ale-houses were frequently distinguished in Shakspeare’s time by a bush or tuft of ivy at their doors; a custom which more particularly prevailed in Warwickshire, and is still practised, remarks Mr. Ritson, in this county, “at statute-hirings, wakes, etc. by people who sell ale at no other time.” The poet alludes to this observance in his Epilogue to *As You like It*:—“If it be true,” he says, “that Good wine needs no bush, ’tis true, that a good play needs no epilogue: Yet to good wine they do use good bushes.” Several old plays mention the same custom, and Bishop Earle, in his “*Microcosmography*,” tells us that “A Tavern is a degree, or (if you will) a pair of stairs above an ale-house, where men are drunk with more credit and apology. If the vintner’s rose be at door, it is a sign sufficient, but the absence of this is supplied by the ivy-bush. ‡

That houses of this description, the whole furniture of which, according to Earle, consisted but of a stool, a table, and a § *pot de chambre*, were as numerous two hundred years ago as at present, and the scene of the same disgusting and intemperate orgies, is but too apparent from the invective of Robert Burton:—

* Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, vol. i. p. 414, 415. Edit. of 1807.

† Moryson’s *Itinerary*, part iii. p. 151. folio. London, 1617.

‡ Bliss’s, edition, 1811. p. 37, 38.

§ Earle’s *Microcosmography*, p. 38.

"See the mischief," he exclaims; "many men knowing that merry company is the only medicine against melancholy, will therefore neglect their business, and in another extream, spend all their dayes among good fellows, in a Tavern or an Ale-house, and know not otherwise how to bestow their time but in drinking; malt worms, men fishes, or water snakes, "*Qui bibunt solum ranarum more, nihil comedentes,*" like so many frogs in a puddle. 'Tis their sole exercise to eat, and drink; to sacrifice to Volupia, Rumina, Edulica, Potina, Mellona, is all their religion. They wish for Philoxenus neck, Jupiter's *trinoctium*, and that the sun would stand still as in Joshua's time, to satisfie their lust, that they might "*dies noctesque pergræcari et bibere.*" Flourishing wits, and men of good parts, good fashion, and good worth, basely prostitute themselves to every rogues company, to take tobacco and drink, to roar and sing scurrile songs in base places.

"Invenies aliquem cum percussore jacentem,
Permistum nautis, aut furibus, aut fugitivis."

Juvenal.

"What Thomas Erastus objects to Paracelsus, that he would lye drinking all day long with carmen and tapsters in a Brothel-house, is too frequent amongst us, with men of better note: like Timocreon of Rhodes, "*multa bibens, et multa vorans,*" &c. They drown their wits and seeth their brains in ale."*

Few ceremonies are better calculated to throw light on the manners and customs of a country, than those attendant on Weddings and Burials, and with these, as they occurred in rural life, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, we shall close this chapter.

The style of courtship which prevailed in Shakspeare's time, may be drawn, with considerable accuracy, from the numerous love-dialogues interspersed throughout his plays. From these specimens not much disparity, either in language or manner, appears to have existed between the addresses of the courtier and the country-gentleman; the female character was indeed, at this period, greatly less important than at present; the blandishments of gallantry, and the elegancies of compliment were little known, and consequently the expression of the tender passion admitted of neither much variety nor much polish. The amatory dialogues of Hamlet, Hotspur, and Henry the Fifth, are not more refined than those which occur between Master Fenton and Anne Page, in the Merry Wives of Windsor; between Lorenzo and Jessica in the Merchant of Venice, and between Orlando and Rosalind, in As You Like It. These last, which may be considered as instances taken from the middle class of life, together with a few drawn from the lower rank of rural manners, such as the courtship of Touchstone and Audrey, and of Silvius and Phœbe, in As You Like It, will sufficiently apply to the illustration of our present subject; but it must be remarked that, in point of fancy, sentiment, and simplicity, the most pleasing love-scenes in Shakspeare are those that take place between Romeo and Juliet, and between Florizel and Perdita; the latter especially present a most lovely and engaging picture, on the female side, of pastoral naïveté and sweetness; and will, in part, serve to show, how far, in the opinion of Shakspeare, refinement was, at that time, compatible, as a just representation of nature, with cottage-life.

Betrothing or plighting of troth, as an affiance or promise of future marriage, was still, there is reason to suppose, often observed in Shakspeare's time, especially in the country, and as a private rite. The interchange of rings was the ceremony used on this occasion, to which the poet refers in his Two Gentlemen of Verona:

"*Julia.* Keep this remembrance for thy Julia's sake.

(*Giving a ring.*)

Pro. Why then we'll make exchange; here take you this.

Jul. And seal the bargain with a holy kiss."

Act. ii. sc. 2.

The public celebration of this contract, or what was termed espousals,† wa

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. p. 191.

† "Vincent de Beauvais, a writer of the 13th century, in his "*Speculum historiale*," lib. ix. c. 70., has defined *espousals* to be a contract of future marriage, made either by a simple promise, by earnest or security given, by a ring, or by an oath." Douce's *Illustrations* vol. i. p. 109.

formerly in this country, as well as upon the Continent, a constant preliminary to marriage. It usually took place in the church, and though nearly, if not altogether, disused, towards the close of the fifteenth century, is minutely described by Shakspeare in his *Twelfth Night*. Olivia, addressing Sebastian, says,—

“ Now go with me, and with this holy man,
 Into the chantry by : there before him
 And underneath that consecrated roof
 Plight me the full assurance of your faith ;
 That my most jealous and too doubtful soul
 May live at peace. He shall conceal it
 Whiles you are willing it shall come to note ;
 What time we will our celebration keep
 According to my birth.”

Act. iv. sc. 3.

A description of what passed at this ceremony of espousals or betrothing, is given by the priest himself in the first scene of the subsequent act, who calls it

“ A contract of eternal bond of love
 Confirm'd by mutual joinder of your hands,
 Attested by the holy close of lips,
 Strengthened by interchangement of your rings ;
 And all the ceremony of this compact
 Seal'd in my function, by my testimony.”

Act. v. sc. 1.

These four observances, therefore; 1st, the joining of hands; 2dly, the mutually given kiss; 3dly, the interchangement of rings; and 4thly, the testimony of witnesses: appear to have been essential parts of the public ceremony of betrothing or espousals, which usually preceded the marriage rite by the term of forty days. The oath, indeed, administered on this occasion was to the following effect:—“You swear by God and his holy saints herein and by all the saints of Paradise, that you will take this woman whose name is N. to wife within forty days, if holy church will permit.” The priest then joining their hands, said—“And thus you affianced yourselves;” to which the parties answered,—“Yes, sir.”* So frequently has Shakspeare referred to this custom of troth-plighting, that, either privately or publicly, we must conclude it to have been of common usage in his days: thus, in *Measure for Measure*, Mariana says to Angelo,

“ This is the hand, which with a vow'd contract,
 Was fast belock'd in thine : ”

Act. v. sc. 1.

and then addressing the duke, she exclaims,

“ As there is sense in truth, and truth in virtue,
 I am affianc'd this man's wife.”

Act. v. sc. 1.

So in “*King John*” King Philip and the Arch-duke of Austria, encouraging the connection of the Dauphin and Blanch :

“ *K. Phil.* It likes us well;—Young princes, close your hands.
Aust. And your lips too; for, I am well assur'd
 That I did so, when I was first assur'd.”†

Act. iii. sc. 1.

One immoral consequence arising from this custom of public betrothing was, that the parties, depending upon the priest as a witness, frequently cohabited as man and wife. It would appear, indeed, from a passage in Shakspeare, that the ceremony of troth-plight, at least among the lower orders, was considered as a

* Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. p. 113.

† Here *assur'd* is taken in the sense of *affianced* or *contracted*. If necessary, many more instances of betrothing, and troth-plighting, might be brought forward from our author's dramas.

sufficient warrant for intercourse of this kind; for he makes the jealous Leontes, in his Winter's Tale, exclaim,

"My wife's a hobby horse; deserves a name
As rank as any flax-wench, that puts to
Before her troth-plight."

Act. i. sc. 2.

We must not forget, however, to remark, while on the subject of betrothing, that a singular proof of delicacy and attention to the fair sex, on this occasion, during the sixteenth century, has been quoted by Mr. Strutt, from a manuscript in the Harleian library, and which runs thus:

"By the civil law, whatever is given "ex sponsalitia largitate," betwixt them that are promised in marriage, hath a condition, for the most part silent, that it may be had again if marriage ensue not; but if the man should have had a kiss for his money, he should lose one half of what he gave. Yet with the woman it is otherwise; for kissing or not kissing, whatever she gave, she may have it again."*

Concerning the customs attendant on the celebration of the marriage rite, among the middle and inferior ranks, in the country, during the period which we are endeavouring to illustrate, much information, of the description we want, may be found in Shakspeare and his contemporaries.

The procession accompanying a rural bride, of some consequence, or of the middle rank, to church, has been thus given us:—

"The bride being attired in a gown of sheep's russet, and a kirtle of fine worsted, her hair attired with a habillement of gold, and her hair as yellow as gold hanging down behind her, which was curiously combed and plaited, she was led to church between two sweet boys, with bride laces and rosemary tied about their silken sleeves. There was a fair bride-cup of silver, gilt, carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary, gilded very fair, hung about with silken ribbands of all colours. Musicians came next, then a groupe of maidens, some bearing great bride-cakes, others garlands of wheat finely gilded; and thus they passed on to the church."†

Rosemary being supposed to strengthen the memory, was considered as an emblem of fidelity, and, at this period, was almost as constantly used at weddings as at funerals: "There's rosemary," says Ophelia, "that's for remembrance." Many passages, illustrative of this usage at weddings, might be taken from our old plays, during the reign of James I., but two or three will suffice.

———"will I be wed this morning,
Thou shalt not be there, nor once be graced with
A piece of Rosemary."‡

"Were the rosemary branches dipp'd, and all
The hippocras and cakes eat and drunk off;
Were these two arms encompass'd with the hands
Of bachelors to lead me to the church."§

"*Phis.* Your master is to be married to-day?
Trim. Else all this rosemary is lost." **

* Strutt's Manners and Customs, vol. iii. p. 155.

† History of Jack of Newbury, 4to. chap. ii.

‡ Ram Alley, or Merry Tricks, by Barry, 1611. Vide Ancient British Drama, vol. ii.

§ Beaumont and Fletcher's Scornful Lady, 1616.

** A Faire Quarrel, by Middleton and Rowley, 1617. Besides rosemary, flowers of various kinds were frequently strewn before the bride as she passed to church; a custom alluded to in a well-known line of Shakspeare,

"Our *Bridal Flowers* serve for a buried corse:

and more explicitly depicted in the following passage from one of his contemporaries:—

"*Adriana.* Come straw apace, Lord, shall I never live
To walke to Church on flowers? O 'tis fine,
To see a Bride trip it to Church so lightly,
As if her new Choppines would scorne to bruise
A silly flower!"

Barry's *Ram Alley, or Merry Tricks*, act v. sc. 1. 4to. 1611.

Of the peculiarities attending the marriage-ceremony within the church, a pretty good idea may be formed from the ludicrous wedding of Catherine and Petruchio in the *Taming of the Shrew*. It appears from this description, that it was usual to drink wine at the altar immediately after the service was closed, a custom which was followed by the Bridegroom's saluting the bride.

"He calls for wine:—A health, quoth he; as if
He had been aboard, carousing to his mates
After a storm:—Quaff'd off the muscadel,
And threw the sops all in the sexton's face;—
This done, he took the bride about the neck;
And kiss'd her lips with such a clamorous smack,
That, at the parting, all the church did echo."*

In the account of the procession just quoted, we find that a bride-cup was carried before the bride; out of this all the persons present, together with the new-married couple, were expected to drink in the church. This custom was prevalent, in Shakspeare's time, among every description of people, from the regal head to the thorough-paced rustic; accordingly we are informed, on the testimony of an assisting witness, that the same ceremony took place at the marriage of the Elector Palatine to King James's daughter, on the 14th day of February, 1612-13: there was "in conclusion," he relates, "a joy pronounced by the king and queen, and seconded with congratulation of the lords there present, which crowned with draughts of Ippocras out of a great golden bowle, as an health to the prosperity of the marriage (began by the prince Palatine and answered by the princess). After which were served up by six or seven barons so many bowles filled with wafers, so much of that work was consummate."†

This bride-cup or bowl was, therefore, frequently termed the *knitting* or *contracting* cup; thus in Ben Jonson's "*Magnetick Lady*," Compass says to Practise, after enquiring for a licence,

—————"Mind
The parson's pint t'engage him—
A *knitting-cup* there must be;"‡

and Middleton, in one of his Comedies, gives us the following line:—

"Even when my lip touch'd the *contracting cup*."§

The salutation of the Bride at the altar was a very ancient custom, and is referred to by several of the contemporaries of Shakspeare; Marston, for instance, represents one of his female characters saying,

"The *kisse thou gav'st me in the church*, here take."**

It was still customary at this period, to bless the bridal bed at night, in order to dissipate the supposed illusions of the Devil; a superstitious rite of which Mr. Douce has favoured us with the form, taken from the Manual for the use of Salisbury in the 13th †† century. It is noticed by Chaucer also in his "*Marchantes Tale*," and is mentioned as one of the marriage-ceremonies in the "*Articles ordained by King Henry VII. for the regulation of his Household*." Shakspeare alludes to this ridiculous fashion in the person of Oberon, who tells his fairies,

"To the best *bride-bed* will we,
Which by us shall blessed be."‡‡

* Act. iii. sc. 2.

† Finet's *Philoxenis*, 1656, p. 11.

‡ Folio edit. p. 44. Act iv. sc. 2.

§ No Wit, no Help like a Womans, 8vo. 1657. Middleton was contemporary with Shakspeare, and commenced a dramatic writer in 1602.

** *Insatiate Countess*, 4to. 1603.

†† Douce's *Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 199.

‡‡ *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act v. sc. 2.

To this brief description of marriage-ceremonies, it will be necessary to subjoin some account of those which accompanied the mere rustic wedding, or Bride-ale; and fortunately we have a most curious picture of the kind preserved by Laneham, in his "Letter on the Queen's Entertainment at Kenelworth Castle," in 1575, one part of which was the representation of a country Bride-ale set in order in the Tilt-yard, and exhibited in the great court of the castle. This grotesque piece of pageantry, a faithful draught of rural costume, as it then existed, must have afforded Her Majesty no small degree of amusement.

"Thus were they marshalled. First, all the lustie lads and bold bachelors of the parish, suitably every wight with his blue buckram bridelace and a branch of green broom (cause rosemary is scant there) tied on his left arm (for a that side lies the heart), and his alder poll for a spear in his right hand, in martial order ranged on afore, two and two in a rank: Some with a hat, some in a cap, some a coat, some a jerkin, some for lightness in his doublet and his hose, clean trust with a point afore: Some boots and no spurs, he spurs and no boots, and he neither one nor t'other: One a saddle, another a pad or a pannel fastened with a cord, for girls wear geazon: And these to the number of a sixteen wight riding men and well beseem: But the bridegroom foremost, in his father's tawny worsted jacket (for his friends were fain that he should be a bridegroom before the Queen), a fair straw hat with a capital crown, steeple-wise on his head: a pair of harvest gloves on his hands, as a sign of good husbandry: A pen and inkhorn at his back; for he would be known to be bookish: lame of a leg, that in his youth was broken at football: Well beloved yet of his mother, that lent him a new mufflar for a napkin that was tied to his girdle for losing. It was no small sport to mark this minion in his full appointment, that through good schoolation became as formal in his action, as he had been a bridegroom indeed; with this special grace by the way, that ever as he would have framed him the better countenance, with the worse face he looked.

"Well, Sir, after these horsemen, a lively morrice-dance, according to the ancient manner; six dancers, maid-marian, and the fool. Then three pretty puzels, (maids or damsels, from *pucelle*) as bright as a breast of bacon, of a thirty year old a piece, that carried three special spice-cakes of a bushel of wheat (they had it by measure out of my *Lords* backhouse), before the bride: Cicely with set countenance, and lips so demurely simpering, as it had been a mare cropping of a thistle. After these a lovely lubber woorts,* freckle-faced, red-headed, clean trussed in his doublet and his hose taken up now indeed by commission, for that he was so loth to come forward, for reverence belike of his new cut canvass doublet; and would by his good will have been but a gazer, but found to be a meet actor for his office: That was to bear the bride-cup, formed of a sweet sucket barrel, a faire-turned foot set to it, all seemly besilvered and parcel gilt, adorned with a beautiful branch of broom, gayly begilded for rosemary; from which two broad bride laces of red and yellow buckeram begilded, and gallantly streaming by such wind as there was, for he carried it aloft: This gentle cup-bearer yet had his freckled physiognomy somewhat unhappily infested as he went, by the busy flies, that flocked about the bride-cup for the sweetness of the sucket that it savoured on: but he, like a tall fellow, withstood their malice stoutly (see what manhood may do), beat them away, killed them by scores, stood to his charge, and marched on in order.

"Then followed the worshipful bride, led (after the country manner) between two ancient parishioners, honest townsmen. But a stale stallion, and a well spread, (hot as the weather was) God wot, and ill smelling was she; a thirty-five year old, of colour brown-bay, not very beautiful indeed, but ugly, foul, ill favoured; yet marvellous vain of the office, because she heard say she should dance before the Queen, in which feat she thought she would foot it as finely as the best: Well, after this bride, came there by two and two, a dozen damsels for bride-maids; that for favor, attyre, for fashion and cleanliness, were as meet for such a bride as a treen-ladle for a porridge-pot; more (but for fear of carrying all clean) had been appointed, but these few were enow."†

From a passage in Ben Jonson's "Tale of a Tub," we learn that the dress of the downright rustic, on his wedding day, was as follows:

"He had on a lether doublet, with long points,
And a paire of pin'd-up breech's, like pudding bags:
With yellow stockings, and his hat turn'd up
With a silver claspe, on his leere side."‡

* *Woorts*; of this word I know not the precise meaning; but suppose it is meant to imply plodded or stumbled on.

† Nichols's *Queen Elizabeth's Progresses*, vol. i.—Laneham's Letter, p. 18, 19, 20.

‡ Jonson's Works, fol. edit. of 1640, vol. ii. A Tale of a Tub, p. 72.—Much of the spirit and costume

Of the ceremonies attendant on Christenings, it will be necessary to mention two that prevailed at this period, and which have since fallen into disuse. Shakspeare, who generally transfers the customs of his own times to those periods of which he is treating, represents Henry VIII. saying to Cranmer, whom he had appointed Godfather to Elizabeth,

“Come, come, my lord, you’d spare your *spoons* ;” Act. v. sc. 2.

and again in the dialogue between the porter and his man :

“*Port.* On my christian conscience, this one christening will beget a thousand ; here will be father, godfather, and all together.

“*Man.* The *spoons* will be the bigger, sir.” Act. v. sc. 3.

In the days of Elizabeth and her predecessor, Mary, it was usual for the sponsors at christenings to present the child with silver spoons gilt, on the handles of which were engraved the figures of the apostles, whence they were commonly called apostle-spoons : thus Ben Jonson in “*Bartholomew Fair* ;” “and all this for the hope of two apostle-spoons, to suffer.” * The opulent frequently gave a complete set of spoons, namely, the twelve apostles ; those less rich, selected the four evangelists, and the poorer class were content to offer a single spoon, or, at most, stwo, on which were carved their favourite saint or saints.

Among the higher ranks, in the reign of Henry VIII. the practice at christenings was to give cups or bowls of gold or silver. Accordingly Holinshed, describing the christening of Elizabeth, relates that “the archbishop of Canturburie gave to the princesse a standing cup of gold : the dutches of Norfolke gave to her a standing cup of gold, fretted with pearle : the marchionesse of Dorset gave three gilt bolles, pounced with a cover : and the marchionesse of Excester gave three standing bolles graven, all gilt with a cover.” †

In the Harleian MS. Vol. 6395, occurs a scarce pamphlet, entitled “*Merry Passages and Jeasts*,” from which Dr. Birch transcribed the following curious anecdote, as illustrative both of the custom of offering spoons, and of the intimacy which subsisted between Shakspeare and Jonson. “Shakspeare,” says the author of this collection, who names Donne as his authority for the story, “was godfather to one of Ben Jonson’s children, and after the christening, being in deepe study, Jonson came to cheer him up, and ask’d him why he was so melancholy : No ’faith, Ben, says he, not I ; but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved

of the *rural wedding* of the sixteenth century continued to survive until within these eighty years. “I have received,” says Mr. Brand, who wrote in 1776, “from those who have been present at them, the following account of the customs used at vulgar Northern Weddings, about half a century ago :—

“The young women in the neighbourhood, with bride-favours (knots of ribbands) at their breasts, and nosegays in their hands, attended the Bride on her wedding-day in the morning.—Fore-Riders announced with shouts the arrival of the Bridegroom ; after a kind of breakfast, at which the bride-cakes were set on and the barrels broached, they walked out towards the church.—The Bride was led by two young men ; the Bridegroom by two young women : Pipers preceded them, while the crowd tossed up their hats, shouted and clapped their hands. An indecent custom prevailed after the ceremony, and that too before the altar :—Young men strove who could first unloose, or rather pluck off the Bride’s garters : Ribbands supplied their place on this occasion ; whosoever was so fortunate as to tear them thus off from her legs, bore them about the church in triumph.

“It is still usual for the young men present to salute the Bride immediately after the performing of the marriage service.

“Four, with their horses, were waiting without : they saluted the Bride at the church gate, and immediately mounting, contended who should first carry home the good news, and win what they call the kail ;” i. e. a smoking prize of spice-broth, which stood ready prepared to reward the victor in this singular kind of race.

“Dinner succeeded ; to that dancing and supper ; after which a posset was made, of which the Bride and Bridegroom were always to taste first.—The men departed the room till the Bride was undressed by her maids, and put to bed ; the Bridegroom in his turn was undressed by his men, and the ceremony concluded with the well-known rite of throwing the stocking.”—Bourne’s *Antiquitates Vulg.* apud Brand, p. 371, 372, 373. edit. 1810.

* Ben Jonson’s Works, fol. edit. 1640. vol. ii. p. 6.

† Holinshed’s Chronicles, vol. iii. p. 787. edit. 1808.

at last. I pr'ythee what? says he.—I'faith, Ben, I'll give him a douzen good *latten* (Latin) spoons, and thou shalt translate them.”* It was not until the close of the seventeenth century, that this practice of spoon-giving at christenings ceased as a general custom.

Another baptismal ceremony, now laid aside, was the use of the chrisome, or white cloth, which was put on the child after the performance of the sacred rite. To this usage Dame Quickly alludes in describing the death of Falstaff, though, in accordance with her character, she corrupts the term: “’A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any christom child.” †

Previous to the Reformation, oil was used, as well as water, in baptism, or rather a kind of mixture of oil and balsam, which in the Greek was called *Χρισμα*; hence the white cloth worn on this occasion, as an emblem of purity, was denominated the chrismale or chrism-cloth. During the era of using this holy unction, with which the priest made the sign of the cross, on the breast, shoulders, and head of the child, the chrismale was worn only for seven days, as symbolical, it is said, of the seven ages of life; but after the Reformation, the oil being omitted, it was kept on the child until the purification of the mother, when, after the ceremony of churching, it was returned to the minister, by whom it had been originally supplied. If the child died during the month of wearing the chrisome-cloth, it was buried in it, and children thus situated were called in the bills of mortality chrisoms. This practice, which was common in the days of Shakspeare, continued in use for nearly a century afterwards; for Blount in his “Glossography,” 1678, explains the word chrisoms as meaning such children as die within the month of birth, because during that time they use to wear the chrisom-cloth. ‡

We shall now proceed to consider some of the peculiarities accompanying the Funeral Rites of this period; and, in the first place, we shall notice the passing-bell. This was rung at an early era of the church, to solicit the prayers of all good christians for the welfare of the soul passing into another world: thus Durandus, who wrote towards the close of the twelfth century, says: “Verum aliquo moriente, campanæ debent pulsari, ut populus hoc audiens, oret pro illo:” when any one is dying, the bells must be tolled, that the people may put up their prayers for him.” § This custom of ringing a bell for a soul just departing, which is *now* relinquished, the bell only tolling after death, we have reason to believe was still observed in Shakspeare’s time; for he makes Northumberland in King Henry IV. remark on the “bringer of unwelcome news,” that

————— “his tongue
Sounds ever after as a sullen bell,
Remember’d knolling a *departing* friend.”

Act i, sc. 1.

Another benefit formerly supposed to be derived from the sounding of the passing-bell, and which, from the scene of Cardinal Beaufort’s death, was probably a part of Shakspeare’s creed, consisted in the discomfiture of the evil spirits, who were supposed to surround the bed of the dying person; and who, terrified by the tolling of the holy bell, were compelled to keep aloof; accordingly Durandus mentions it as one of the effects of bell-ringing, “ut dæmones timentes** fugiant;” and in the Golden Legende, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, 1498, it is observed that “the evill spirytes that ben in the regyon of the ayre, doubte moche when

* L’Estrange, a nephew to Sir Roger L’Estrange, appears to have been the compiler of these anecdotes. Of the truth of the story, however, as far as it relates to Shakspeare and Jonson, there is reason to entertain much doubt.

† Act ii. sc. 3.

‡ Vide Douce’s Illustrations, vol. i. p. 488.

§ Vide Rationale Divinorum Officiorum: the first edition was printed in 1459.

** Durandi Rational. lib. i. c. 4.

they here the bells rongen : and this is the cause why the belles ben rongen—to the ende that the feindes and wycked spirytes shold be abashed and flee.” *

That these opinions, indeed, relative to the passing-bell, continued to prevail, as things of general belief, during the greater part of the seventeenth century, is evident from the works of the pious Bishop Taylor, in which are to be found several forms of prayer for the souls of the departing, to be offered up during the tolling of the passing-bell. In these the violence of Hell is deprecated, and it is petitioned that the spirits of darkness may be driven far from the couch of the dying sinner. †

So common, indeed, was this practice, that almost every individual had an exclamation or form of prayer ready to be recited on hearing the passing-bell, whence the following proverbial rhyme :

“ When the Bell begins to toll
Cry, *Lord have mercy on the soul.*”

In the “*Vittoria Corombona*” of Webster, this custom is alluded to in a manner singularly wild and striking. Cornelia says :

“ *Cor.* I’ll give you a saying which my grand-mother
Was wont, when she heard the bell, to sing o’er unto her lute.

Ham. Do an you will, do.

Cor. Call for the robin-red-breast, and the wren,
Since o’er shady groves they hover,
And with leaves and flowers do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men.
Call unto his funeral dole
The ant, the field-mouse, and the mole,
To raise him hillocks that shall keep him warm,
And (when gay tombs are robb’d) sustain no harm,
But keep the wolf far thence : that’s foe to men,
For with his nails he’ll dig them up again.”

Ancient British Drama, vol. iii. p. 41.

Even so late as the commencement of the eighteenth century, it appears that this custom of praying during the passing-bell still lingered in some parts of the country ; for Mr. Bourne, the first edition of whose book was published in 1725, after vindicating the practice, adds,—“ I know several religious families in this place (Newcastle), and I hope it is so in other places too, who always observe it, whenever the melancholy season offers ; and therefore it will at least sometimes happen, when we put up our prayers constantly at the tolling of the bell, that we shall pray for a soul departing. And though it be granted, that it will oftener happen otherwise, as the regular custom is so little followed ; yet that can be no harmful praying for the dead.” ‡

Immediately after death a ceremony commenced, the most offensive part of which has not been laid aside for more than half a century. This was called the Licke or Lake-wake, a term derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Lic*, a corpse, and *Wæcce*, a wake or watching. It originally consisted of a meeting of the friends and relations of the deceased, for the purpose of watching by the body from the moment it ceased to breathe, to its exportation to the grave ; a duty which was at first performed with solemnity and piety, accompanied by the singing of psalms and the recitation of the virtues of the dead. It speedily, however, degenerated into a scene of levity, of feasting, and intoxication ; to such a degree, indeed, that it was thought necessary at a provincial synod held in London during the reign of Edward III. to issue a canon for the restriction of the watchers to the near relations and most intimate friends of the deceased, and only to such of these as

* For an account of three editions of De Worde’s *Golden Legende*, see Dibdin’s *Typographical Antiquit.* vol. ii. p. 73.

† These forms of prayer are transcribed by Bourne in his *Antiquitates Vulgares*.—Vide Brand’s edit. p. 10. Bishop Taylor died in 1667.

‡ Bourne apud Brand, p. 9.

offered to repeat a fixed number of psalms for the benefit of his soul.* To this regulation little attention, we apprehend, was paid; for the Lake-wake appears to have been observed as a meeting of revelry during the whole of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and Mr. Bourne, so late as the year 1725, declares, that it was then "a scene of sport and drinking and lewdness."†

In Scotland during the period of which we are treating, and even down to the rebellion of 1745, the Lake-wake was observed with still greater form and effect than in England, though not often with a better moral result. Mr. Pennant describing it, when speaking of the Highland customs, under the mistaken etymology of Late-wakes, says, that the evening after the death of any person, the relations or friends of the deceased met at the house, attended by a bag-pipe or fiddle; the nearest of kin, be it wife, son, or daughter, opened a melancholy ball, dancing and greeting, i. e. crying violently, at the sametime; and this continued till day-light, but with such gambols and frolics among the younger part of the company, that the loss which occasioned them was often more than supplied by the consequences of that night.‡ Mrs. Grant, however, in her lately published work on the Superstitions of the Highlanders, has given us a more favourable account of this ancient custom, which she has connected with a wild traditionary tale of much moral interest.

A peasant of Glen Banchar, a dreary and secluded recess in the central Highlands,

"Was fortunate in all respects but one. He had three very fine children, who all, in succession, died after having been weaned, though, before, they gave every promise of health and firmness. Both parents were much afflicted; but the father's grief was clamorous and unmanly. They resolved that the next should be suckled for two years, hoping, by this, to avoid the repetition of such a misfortune. They did so; and the child, by living longer, only took a firmer hold of their affections, and furnished more materials for sorrowful recollection. At the close of the second year, he followed his brothers; and there were no bounds to the affliction of the parents.

"There are, however, in the economy of Highland life, certain duties and courtesies which are indispensable; and for the omission of which nothing can apologise. One of those is, to call in all their friends, and feast them at the time of the greatest family distress. The death of the child happened late in spring, when sheep were abroad in the more inhabited straths; but, from the blasts in that high and stormy region, were still confined to the cot. In a dismal snowy evening, the man, unable to stifle his anguish, went out, lamenting aloud, for a lamb to treat his friends with at the Late-wake. At the door of the cot, however, he found a stranger standing before the entrance. He was astonished, in such a night, to meet a person so far from any frequented place. The stranger was plainly attired; but had a countenance expressive of singular mildness and benevolence, and, addressing him in a sweet, impressive voice, asked him what he did there amidst the tempest. He was filled with awe, which he could not account for, and said, that he came for a lamb. 'What kind of lamb do you mean to take?' said the stranger. 'The very best I can find,' he replied, 'as it is to entertain my friends; and I hope you will share of it.'—'Do your sheep make any resistance when you take away the lamb, or any disturbance afterwards?'—'Never,' was the answer. 'How differently am I treated!' said the traveller. 'When I come to visit my sheepfold, I take, as I am well entitled to do, the best lamb to myself; and my ears are filled with clamour of discontent by these ungrateful sheep, whom I have fed, watched, and protected.'

"He looked up in amaze; but the vision was fled. He went however for the lamb, and brought it home with alacrity. He did more: It was the custom of these times—a custom, indeed, which was not extinct till after 1745—for people to dance at Late-wakes. It was a mournful kind of movement, but still it was dancing. The nearest relation of the deceased often began the ceremony weeping; but did, however, begin it, to give the example of fortitude and resignation. This man, on other occasions, had been quite unequal to the performance of this duty; but at this time he, immediately on coming in, ordered music to begin, and danced the solitary measure appropriate to such occasions. The reader must have very little sagacity or knowledge of the purport and consequences of visions, who requires to be told, that many sons were born, lived, and prospered afterwards in this reformed family."§

* Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 546.

† Antiquitates Vulgares apud Brand, p. 23.

‡ Tour in Scotland.

§ Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland, vol. i. p. 184—188.

Some vestiges of the Lake-wake still remain at this day in remote parts of the north of England, especially at the period of laying out, or streaking the corpse, as it is termed; and here it may be remarked, that in the time of Shakspeare, the practice of winding the corse, or putting on the winding-sheet, was a ceremony of a very impressive kind, and accompanied by the solemn melody of dirges. Some lines, strikingly illustrative of this pious duty, are to be found in the "White Devil; or Vittoria Corombona" of Webster, published in 1612. Francisco, Duke of Florence, tells Flaminio,

"I found them *winding* of Marcello's corse;
And there is such a solemn melody,
'Tween doleful songs, tears, and sad elegies;
Such as old grandames, watching by the dead,
Were wont to outwear the nights with; that believe me,
I had no eyes to guide me forth the room,
They were so o'ercharged with water.—"

Cornelia, the Moor, and three other ladies, discovered WINDING Marcello's corse. A SONG.

Cor. This rosemary is wither'd, pray get fresh;
I would have these herbs grow up in his grave,
When I am dead and rotten. Reach the bays,
I'll tie a garland here about his head:
'Twill keep my boy from lightning. This sheet
I have kept this twenty years, and every day
Hallow'd it with my prayers; I did not think
He should have worn it." *

Another exquisite passage of this fine old poet alludes to the same practice—a villain of ducal rank, expiring from the effect of poison, exclaims,

"O thou soft natural death! that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber!—no rough-bearded comet
Stares on thy mild departure; the dull owl
Beats not against thy casement; the hoarse wolf
Scents not thy carion. Pity winds thy corse,
Whilst horror waits on princes." †

After the funeral was over, it was customary among all ranks, to give a cold, and sometimes a very ostentatious, entertainment to the mourners. To this usage Shakspeare refers, in the character of Hamlet:

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables,"

a passage which Mr. Collins has illustrated by the following quotation from a contemporary writer: "His corpes was with funerall pompe conveyed to the church, and there sollemnly enterred, nothing omitted which necessitie or custom could claime; a sermon, a banquet, and like observations." ‡

The funeral feast is not yet extinct; it may occasionally be met with in places remote from the metropolis, and more particularly in the northern counties among some of the wealthy yeomanry. Mr. Douce considers the practice as

"Certainly borrowed from the *cæna feralis* of the Romans," and adds, "in the North this feast is called an *arval* or *arvil* supper, and the loaves that are sometimes distributed among the poor, arval-bread. Not many years since one of these arvals was celebrated in a village in Yorkshire at a public-house, the sign of which was the family arms of a nobleman whose motto is "*Virtus post funera vivit*." The undertaker, who, though a clerk, was no scholar, requested a gentleman present to explain to him the meaning of these Latin words, which he readily and facetiously did in the following manner; *Virtus*, a parish clerk, *vivit*, lives well, *post funera*,

* Ancient British Drama, vol. iii. p. 40.

‡ The Tragique Historie of the Faire Valeria of London, 1598.

† Ibid. p. 36.

at an arval. The latter word is apparently derived from some lost Teutonic term that indicated a funeral pile on which the body was burned in times of Paganism." *

A few observations must still be added on the pleasing, though now nearly obsolete, practice of carrying ever-greens and garlands at funerals, and of decorating the grave with flowers. There is something so strikingly emblematic, so delightfully soothing in these old rites, that though the prototype be probably heathen, their disuse is to be regretted.

"The carrying of ivy, or laurel, or rosemary, or some of those ever-greens," says Bourne, "is an emblem of the soul's immortality. It is as much as to say, that though the body be dead, yet the soul is ever-green and always in life: it is not like the body, and those other greens which die and revive again at their proper seasons; no autumn nor winter can make a change in it, but it is unalterably the same, perpetually in life, and never dying."

"The Romans, and other heathens, upon this occasion made use of cypress, which being once cut, will never flourish nor grow any more, as an emblem of their dying for ever, and being no more in life. But instead of that, the ancient Christians used the things before mentioned; they laid them under the corpse in the grave, to signify, that they who die in Christ, do not cease to live. For though, as to the body they die to the world, yet as to their souls they live to God."

"And as the carrying of these ever-greens is an emblem of the soul's immortality, so it is also of the resurrection of the body: for as these herbs are not entirely plucked up, but only cut down, and will, at the returning season, revive and spring up again; so the body, like them, is but cut down for a while, and will rise and shoot up again at the resurrection." †

The bay and rosemary were the plants usually chosen, the former, as being said to revive from the root, when apparently dead, and the latter from its supposed virtue in strengthening the memory:

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance."

Shakspeare has frequently noticed these ever-greens, garlands, and flowers, as forming a part of the tributary rites of the departed, as elegant memorials of the dead: at the funeral of Juliet he adopts the rosemary:—

"Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary
On this fair corse, and as the custom is,
In all her best array bear her to church."

Act iv, sc. 5.

Garlands of flowers were formerly either hung up in country-churches, as a mark of honour and esteem, over the seats of those who had died virgins, or were remarkable for chastity and fidelity, or were placed in the form of crowns on the coffins of the deceased, and buried with them, for the same purpose. Of these crowns and garlands, which were in frequent use until the commencement of the last century, a very curious account has been given by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

"In this nation (as well as others)," he observes, "by the abundant zeal of our ancestors, virginity was held in great estimation; insomuch that those which died in that state were rewarded, at their deaths, with a garland or crown on their heads, denoting their triumphant victory over the lusts of the flesh. Nay, this honour was extended even to a widow that had enjoyed but one husband (saith Weever in his *Fun. Mon.* p. 12). And, in the year 1733, the present clerk of the parish church of Bromley in Kent, by his digging a grave in that church-yard, close to the east end of the chancel wall, dug up one of these crowns, or garlands, which is most artificially wrought in fillagree work with gold and silver wire, in resemblance of myrtle (with which plant the funebrial garlands of the ancients were composed), whose leaves are fastened to hoops of large wire of iron, now something corroded with rust, but both the gold and silver remains to this time very little different from its original splendor. It was also lined with cloth of silver, a piece of which, together with part of this curious garland, I keep as a choice relic of antiquity."

"Besides these crowns, the ancients had also their depository garlands, the use of which were

* Douce's *Illustrations*, vol. ii p. 202, 203.

† Bourne's *Antiquitates Vulg.* p. 33, 34

continued even till of late years (and perhaps are still retained in many parts of this nation, for my own knowledge of these matters extends not above twenty or thirty miles round London), which garlands, at the funerals of the deceased, were carried solemnly before the corpse by two maids, and afterward hung up in some conspicuous place within the church, in memorial of the departed person, and were (at least all that I have seen) made after the following manner, viz. the lower rim or circlet, was a broad hoop of wood, whereunto was fixed, at the sides thereof, part of two other hoops crossing each other at the top, at right angles, which formed the upper part, being about one third longer than the width; these hoops were wholly covered with artificial flowers of paper, dyed horn, or silk, and more or less beauteous, according to the skill and ingenuity of the performer. In the vacancy of the inside, from the top, hung white paper, cut in form of gloves, whereon was wrote the deceased's name, age, &c. together with long slips of various coloured paper, or ribbons. These were many times intermixed with gilded or painted empty shells of blown eggs, as farther ornaments; or, it may be, as emblems of the bubbles or bitterness of this life; whilst other garlands had only a solitary hour-glass hanging therein, as a more significant symbol of mortality.

“About forty years ago, these garlands grew much out of repute, and were thought, by many, as very unbecoming decorations for so sacred a place as the church; and at the reparation, or new beautifying several churches, where I have been concerned, I was obliged, by order of the minister and churchwardens, to take the garlands down, and the inhabitants were strictly forbidden to hang up any more for the future. Yet, notwithstanding, several people, unwilling to forsake their ancient and delightful custom, continued still the making of them, and they were carried at the funerals, as before, to the grave, and put therein, upon the coffin, over the face of the dead; this I have seen done in many places.” Bromley in Kent. *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1747.

Shakspeare has alluded to these maiden rites in *Hamlet*, where the priest, at the interment of Ophelia, says,

— “Here she is allow'd her virgin *crants*,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.”

Act v, sc. 1.

The term *crants*, observes Johnson, on the authority of a correspondent, is the German word for garlands, and was probably retained by us from the Saxons.

The strewments mentioned in this passage refer to a pleasing custom, which is still, we believe, preserved in Wales, of scattering flowers over the graves of the deceased.* It is manifestly copied from the funeral rites of the Greeks and Romans, and was early introduced into the Christian church; for St. Jerome, in an epistle to his friend Pammachius on the death of his wife, remarks, “whilst other husbands strawed violets and roses, and lilies, and purple flowers, upon the graves of their wives, and comforted themselves with such like offices, Pammachius bedewed her ashes and venerable bones with the balsam of alms; † and Mr. Strutt, in his “*Manners and Customs of England*,” tells us, “that of old it was usual to adorn the graves of the deceased with roses and other flowers (but more especially those of lovers, round whose tombs they have often planted rose trees): Some traces,” he observes, “of this ancient custom are yet remaining in the church-yard of Oakley, in Surry, which is full of rose trees planted round the graves.” ‡

Many of the dramas of our immortal bard bear testimony to his partiality for this elegantly affectionate tribute; a practice which there is reason to suppose was, in the country at least, not uncommon in his days: thus Capulet, in *Romeo and Juliet*, observes,

“Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse;”

Act iv, sc. 5.

and the Queen in *Hamlet* is represented as performing the ceremony at the grave of Ophelia:

* See Pratt's *Gleanings in Wales*, and Mason's *Elegy in a Church-yard in Wales*.

† Bourne's *Antiq.* apud Brand, p. 45.

‡ Anglo Saxon *Æra*, vol. i. p. 69.

" *Queen.* Sweets to the sweet: Farewell! (Scattering Flowers.)
 I hop'd thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife;
 I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
 And not have strew'd thy grave." Act v, sc. 1.

It was considered, likewise, as a duty incumbent on the survivors, annually to plant shrubs and flowers upon, and to tend and keep neat, the turf which covered the remains of their beloved friends; in accordance with this usage, Mariana is drawn in *Pericles* decorating the tomb of her nurse:

—————" I will rob Tellus of her weed,
 To strew thy green with flowers: the yellows, blues,
 The purple violets, and marigolds,
 Shall, as a chaplet, hang upon thy grave,
 While summer days do last: " Act iv, sc. 1.

and *Arviragus*, in *Cymbeline*, pathetically exclaims,

—————" With fairest flowers,
 Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, *Fidele*,
 I'll sweeten thy sad grave: Thou shalt not lack
 The flower, that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor
 The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins; no, nor
 The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
 Out-sweeten'd not thy breath." * Act iv, sc. 2.

The only relic which yet exists in this country of a custom so interesting, is to be found in the practice of protecting the hallowed mound by twigs of osier, an attention to the mansions of the dead, which is still observable in most of the country-church-yards in the south of England.

We have thus advanced in pursuit of our object, namely, "A Survey of Country Life during the Age of Shakspeare," as far as a sketch of its manner and customs, resulting from a brief description of rural characters, holidays, and festivals, wakes, fairs, weddings, and burials, will carry us; and we shall now proceed with the picture, by adding some account of those diversions of our ancestors which could not with propriety find a place under any of the topics that have been hitherto noticed; endeavouring in our progress to render the great dramatic bard the chief illustrator of his own times.

* In Mr. Malkin's notes on *Mason's Elegy*, we have the following elegant and pleasing description of this pathetic custom, as it still exists in Wales:—"It is a very ancient and general practice in Glamorgan," he remarks, "to plant flowers on the graves, so that many Church-yards have something like the splendour of a rich and various parterre. Besides this it is usual to strew the graves with flowers and ever-greens, within the Church as well as out of it, thrice at least every year, on the same principle of delicate respect as the stones are whitened.

"No flowers or ever-greens are permitted to be planted on graves but such as are sweet-scented: the pink and polyanthus, sweet williams, gilliflowers, and carnations, mignonette, thyme, hyssop, camomile, rosemary, make up the pious decoration of this consecrated garden.—

"The white rose is always planted on a virgin's tomb. The red rose is appropriated to the grave of any person distinguished for goodness, and especially benevolence of character.

"In the Easter week most generally the graves are newly dressed, and manured with fresh earth, when such flowers or ever-greens as may be wanted or wished for are planted. In the Whitsuntide Holidays, or rather the preceding week, the graves are again looked after, weeded, and otherwise dressed, or, if necessary, planted again.—This work the nearest relations of the deceased always do with their own hands, and never by servants or hired persons.—

"When a young couple are to be married, their ways to the Church are strewed with sweet-scented flowers and ever-greens. When a young unmarried person dies, his or her ways to the grave are also strewed with sweet flowers and ever-greens; and on such occasions it is the usual phrase, that those persons are going to their nuptial beds, not to their graves.—None ever molest the flowers that grow on graves; for it is deemed a kind of sacrilege to do so. A relation or friend will occasionally take a pink, if it can be spared, or a sprig of thyme, from the grave of a beloved or respected person, to wear it in remembrance; but they never take much, lest they should deface the growth on the grave.—

"These elegant and highly pathetic customs of South Wales make the best impression on the mind. What can be more affecting than to see all the youth of both sexes in a village, and in every village through which the corpse passes, dressed in their best apparel, and strewing with sweet-scented flowers the ways along which one of their beloved neighbours goes to his or her marriage-bed."

Malkin's Scenery, Antiquities, and Biography of South Wales. 4to. 1804. p. 606.

CHAPTER VIII.

View of Country Life during the Age of Shakspeare continued—Diversions.

THE attempt to describe all the numerous rural diversions which were prevalent during the age of Shakspeare, would be, in the highest degree, superfluous; for the greatest part of them, it is evident, must remain, with such slight or gradual modification as to require but little notice. It will be, therefore, our endeavour, in the course of this chapter, after giving a catalogue of the principal country diversions of the era in question, to dwell only upon those which have subsequently undergone such alterations as to render their former state an object of novelty and curiosity.

This catalogue may be taken, with tolerable accuracy, from Randal Holme of Chester, and from Robert Burton; the former enumerating the games and diversions of the sixteenth century, and the latter those of the prior part of the seventeenth. If to these we add the notices to be drawn from Shakspeare, the sketch will, there is reason to suppose, prove sufficiently extensive.

In the list of Randal Holme will be found the names of some juvenile sports, which are now perhaps no longer explicable; this poetical antiquary, however, shall speak for himself.

“ — They dare challenge for to throw the sledge;
To jumpe or lepe over ditch or hedge;
To wrastle, play at stool-balle, or to runne;
To pitch the barre or to shote offe the gunne;
To play at loggets, nineholes, or ten pinnes;
To trye it out at fote balle by the shinnes;
At ticke tacke, seize noddie, maw, or ruffe;
Hot-cockles, leape froggè, or blindman’s buffe;
To drinke the halfer pottes, or deale at the whole canne;
To playe at chesse, or pue, and inke-horènnè;
To daunce the morris, playe at barley breake;
At alle exploytes a man can thinke or speake;
At shove-grote, venter poynte, at crosse and pyle;
At “ Beshrewe him that’s last at any style; ”
At lepynge over a Christmas bon fyre,
Or at the “ drawynge dame owte o’ the myre; ”
At “ Shoote cock, Gregory,” stoole-ball, and what not;
Pickè-poynt, top, and scourge to make him hot.” *

Burton, after mentioning Hawking, Hunting, Fowling, and Fishing, says, “ many other sports and recreations there be, much in use, as ringing, bowling, shooting, (with the bow), keelpins, tronks, coits, pitching bars, hurling, wrestling, leaping, running, fencing, mustering, swimming, wasters, foiles, foot-ball, balown, quintan, etc., and many such which are the common recreations of the Country folks.” † He subsequently adds bull and bear baiting as common to both countrymen and ‡ citizens, and then subjoins to the list of rural amusements, dancing, singing, masking, mumming, and stage-players. § For the ordinary recreations of winter, as well in the country as in town, he recommends “ cards, tables and dice, shovelboard, chess-play, the philosopher’s game, small trunks, shuttle-cock, billiards, musick, masks, singing, dancing, ule games, frolicks, jests, riddles, catches, purposes, questions and commands, and merry tales.” **

From this statement it will immediately appear, that many of the rural diver-

* MS. Harl. Libr., No. 2057, apud Strutt’s Customs, &c.

† Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. fol. 1676. p. 169, 170.

‡ Ibid. p. 172.

§ Ibid. p. 174.

** Ibid. p. 172.

sions of this period are those likewise of the present day, and that no large portion of the catalogue can with propriety call for a more extended notice.

At the head of those which demand some brief elucidation, we shall place the Itinerant Stage, a country amusement, however, which, in the days of Elizabeth, was fast degenerating into contempt. The performance of secular plays by strolling companies of minstrels, had been much encouraged for two or three centuries, not only by the vulgar, but by the nobility, into whose castles and halls they were gladly admitted, and handsomely rewarded. At the commencement of the sixteenth century, the custom was still common, and Mr. Steevens, as a proof of it, has furnished us with the following entry from the fifth Earl of Northumberland's Household Book, which was begun in the year 1512:—

“ Rewards to Players.

“ Item, to be payd to the said Richard Gowge and Thomas Percy for rewards to players for playes playd in Christynmas by *stranegers* in my house after xxd. every play by estimacion somme xxxiijs. iiijd. Which ys appoynted to be paid to the said Richard Gowge and Thomas Percy at the said Christynmas in full contentacion of the said reward ys xxxiijs. iiijd.”

That these itinerants were still occasionally admitted into the country mansions of the great, during the reign of Elizabeth, we have satisfactory evidence; but it may be sufficient here to remark, that Elizabeth herself was entertained with an historical play at Kenelworth Castle, by performers who came for that purpose from Coventry; and that Shakspeare has favoured us with another instance, by the introduction of the following scene in his *Taming of the Shrew*, supposed to have been written in 1594:—

“ *Lord.* Sirrah, go see what trumpet 'tis that sounds:—

Exit Servant.

Belike, some noble gentleman; that means,
Travelling some journey, to repose him here.—

Re-enter a Servant.

How now? who is it?

Serv. An it please your honour,
Players that offer service to your lordship.

Lord. Bid them come near:—

Enter Players.

Now, fellows, you are welcome.

1 *Play.* We thank your honour.

Lord. Do you intend to stay with me to night?

2 *Play.* So please your lordship to accept our duty.

Lord. With all my heart.—

Go, sirrah, take them to the buttery,

And give them friendly welcome every one:

Let them want nothing that my house affords.”

Act i, sc. 1.

From this passage it may be deduced, that the itinerant players of this period were held in no higher estimation than menial servants; an inference which is corroborated by referring to the anonymous play of *A Taming of a Shrew*, written about 1590, where the entry of the players is thus marked, “Enter two of the plaiers, with packs at their backs.” The abject condition of these strollers, Mr. Pope has attributed, perhaps too hastily, to the stationary performers of this reign; “the *top* of the profession,” he observes, “were then mere players, not gentlemen of the stage; they were led into the buttery by the steward, not placed at the lord's table, or the lady's * *toilette*,” a passage on which Mr. Malone has remarked, that Pope “seems not to have observed, that the players here introduced are stollers; and there is no reason to suppose that our author, Heminge, Burbage, Condell, etc., who were licensed by King James, were treated in this manner.”

* Pope's Preface to his edition of Shakspeare.

On the other hand Mr. Steevens supports the opinion of Pope by asserting, that

“At the period when this comedy (*Taming of a Shrew*) was written, and for many years after, the profession of a player was scarcely allowed to be reputable. The imagined dignity,” he continues, “of those who did not belong to itinerant companies, is, therefore, unworthy consideration. I can as easily believe that the blundering editors of the first folio were suffered to lean their hands on Queen Elizabeth’s chair of state, as that they were admitted to the table of the Earl of Leicester, or the toilette of Lady Hunsden. Like Stephen, in every *Man in his Humour*, the greatest indulgence our histrionic leaders could have expected, would have been a trencher and a napkin in the buttery.”

The inference, however, which Mr. Malone has drawn, appears to have the authority of Shakspeare himself; for when Hamlet is informed of the arrival of the players, he exclaims, “How chances it, they travel: their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways;” a question, the drift of which even Mr. Steevens explains in the following words: “How chances it they travel?—i. e. How happens it that they are become strollers?—Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways—i. e. To have remained in a settled theatre was the more honourable as well as the more lucrative situation.” We have every reason, therefore, to suppose, that the difference between the stroller and the licensed performer was in Shakspeare’s time considerable; and that the latter, although not the companion of lords and countesses, was held in a very respectable light, if his personal conduct were good, and became the occasional associate of the first literary characters of the age; while the former was frequently degraded beneath the rank of a servant, and, in the statute, indeed, 39 Eliz. ch. 4. he is classed with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars.

This depreciation of the character of the itinerant player, towards the close of Elizabeth’s reign, soon narrowed his field of action; the opulent became unwilling to admit into their houses persons thus legally branded; and the stroller was reduced to the necessity of exhibiting his talents at wakes and fairs, on temporary scaffolds and barrel heads; “if he pen for thee once,” says Ben Jonson, addressing a strolling player, “thou shalt not need to travell, with thy pumps full of gravell, any more, after a blinde jade and a hamper, and stalk upon boards and barrel-heads to an old crackt trumpet.”*

Many country-towns, indeed, at this period, were privileged to hold fairs by exhibiting a certain number of stage plays at their annual fairs. Of these, Manningtree in Essex was one of the most celebrated; Heywood mentions it as notorious for yearly plays at its fair; and that its festivity on these occasions was equally known, is evident from Shakspeare’s comparison of Falstaff to a “roasted Manningtree ox with a pudding in his belly.” The histrionic fame of Manningtree Mr. Malone proves by two quotations from Nashe and Decker; the former exclaiming in a poem, called “The Choosing of Valentines,”

————— “Or see a play of strange moralitie,
Shewen by bachelrie of *Manning-tree*,
Whereto the countrie franklins flock-meale swarme;”

and the latter observing, in a tract entitled “Seven deadly Sinnes of London,” 1607, that “Cruelty has got another part to play; it is acted like the old morals at Manningtree.”

This custom of stage-playing at annual fairs continued to support a few itinerant companies; but in general, after the halls of the nobility and gentry were shut against them, ‡ they divided into small parties of three or four, and at length

* *Poetaster*, 1601, vide Ben Jonson’s Works, fol. edit. of 1640, vol. i. p. 267.

† *Apology for Actors*, 1612.

‡ By the statute of the 39 Eliz. any baron of the realm might license a company of players; but by the statute of first James I. “it is declared and enacted, that from thenceforth no authority given, or to be

became mere jugglers, jesters, and puppet-show exhibitors. This last-mentioned amusement, indeed, and its professors, seem to have been known, in this country, under the name of motions, and motion-men, as early as the commencement of the sixteenth century; * and the term, indeed, continued to be thus applied in the time of Jonson, who repeatedly uses it, in his "Bartholomew Fair." † The degradation of the strolling companies, by the statutes of Elizabeth and James, rendered the exhibition of automaton figures, at this period, common throughout the kingdom. They are alluded to by Shakspeare under the appellation of drolleries; thus in the *Tempest*, Alonzo, alarmed at the strange shapes bringing in the banquet, exclaims,

"Give us kind keepers, heavens! What were these?"

a question to which Sebastian replies,

"A *LIVING drollery*,"

Act iii, sc. 3. ‡

meaning by this epithet to distinguish them from the wooden puppets, the performers in the shows called drolleries.

A very popular annual diversion was celebrated, during the age of Shakspeare, and for more than twenty-five years after, on the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire. It has been said that the rural games which constituted this anniversary, were founded by one Robert Dover on the accession of James I.; ‡ but it appears to be ascertained that Dover was only the reviver, with additional splendour, of sports which had been yearly exhibited, at an early period, on the same spot, and perhaps only discontinued for a short time before their revival in 1603.

"We may learn from Rudder's History of Gloucestershire," says Mr. Chalmers, "that, in more early times, there was at Cotswold a customary meeting, every year, at Whitsontide, called an ale, or Whitson-ale, which was attended by all the lads, and the lasses, of the villagery, who, annually, chose a Lord and Lady of the Yule, who were the authorized rulers of the rustic revellers. There is in the Church of Cirencester, say Rudder, an ancient monument, in *basso relievo*, that evinces the antiquity of those games, which were known to Shakspeare, before the accession of King James. They were known, also, to Drayton early in that reign: for upon the map of Gloucestershire, which precedes the fourteenth song, there is a representation of a Whitsun-ale, with a May pole, which last is inscribed 'Heigh for Cotswold.'

"Ascending, next, faire Cotswold's plaines,
She revels with the Shepherd's swaines." §

Mr. Strutt also is of opinion that the Cotswold games had a much higher origin than the time of Dover, and observes that they are evidently alluded to in the following lines by John Heywood the epigrammatist:

"He fometh like a bore, the beaste should seeme bolde,
For he is as fierce as a *lyon of Cotswold*." **

In confirmation of these statements it may be added, that Mr. Steevens and Mr. Chalmers have remarked, that in Randolph's poems, 1638, is to be found

given or made, by any baron of this realm, or any other honourable personage of greater degree, unto any interlude players, minstrels, jugglers, bearward, or any other idle person or persons whatsoever, using any unlawful games or plays, to play or act, should be available to free or discharge the said persons, or any of them, from the pains and punishments of rogues, of vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, in the said statutes (those of Eliz.) mentioned."

* A character in *Gammar Gurton's Needle*, says Mr. Strutt, a comedy supposed to have been written A.D. 1517, declares he will go "and travel with young Goose, the *motion-man*, for a puppet-player." * This reference, however, is inaccurate, for after a diligent perusal of the comedy in question, no such passage is to be found.

† Ben Jonson's Works, fol. edit. 1640, vol. ii. p. 77. act. v. sc. 4.

‡ Vide Malone on the Chronological Order of Shakspeare's Plays.

§ Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, p. 323, note s.

** Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 20.

* Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 150, note b.

“An eclogue on the noble assemblies *revived* on Cotswold hills by Mr. Robert Dover; and in D’Avenant’s poems published the same year, a copy of verses “In celebration of the yearely preserver of the games at Cotswold.”

The Reviver of these far-famed games was an enterprising attorney, a native of Barton on the Heath in Warwickshire, and consequently a near neighbour to Shakspeare’s country-residence. He obtained permission from King James to be the director of these annual sports, which he superintended in person for forty years. They were resorted to by prodigious multitudes of people, and by all the nobility and gentry for sixty miles round, until “the rascally rebellion,” to adopt the phraseology of Anthony Wood, “was begun by the Presbyterians, which gave a stop to their proceedings, and spoiled all that was generous and ingenious elsewhere.” *

They consisted originally, and previous to the direction of Dover, merely of athletic exercises, such as wrestling, leaping, cudgel-playing, sword and buckler fighting, pitching the bar, throwing the sledge, tossing the pike, etc. etc. To these Dover added coursing for the gentlemen and dancing for the ladies; a temporary castle of boards being erected for the accommodation of the fair sex, and a silver collar adjudged as a prize for the fleetest greyhound.

To these two eras of the Cotswold Games Shakspeare alludes in the Second Part of King Henry IV., and in the Merry Wives of Windsor. Justice Shallow refers to the original state of this diversion, when in the first of these dramas he enumerates among the swinge-bucklers, “Will Squeele, a Cotsole man;” and to Dover’s improvement of them, when, in the second, he represents Slender asking Page, “How does your fallow greyhound, Sir? I heard say, he was out-run on Cotsale.”

Dover, tradition says, was highly delighted with the superintendence of these games, and assumed, during his direction of them, a great deal of state and consequence. “Captain Dover,” relates Granger, a title which courtesy had probably bestowed on this public-spirited attorney, “had not only the permission of James I. to celebrate the Cotswold Games, but appeared in the very cloaths which that monarch had formerly worn †, and with much more dignity in his air and aspect.” ‡

In 1636, there was published at London a small quarto, entitled, “Annalia Dubrensis, upon the yearly Celebration of Mr. Robert Dover’s Olympic Games, upon Cotswold Hills, a book consisting entirely of commendatory verses, written by Jonson, Drayton, Randolph, and many others, and with a print prefixed of Dover on horseback.

It is probable that, at this period, and for many subsequent years, there were several places in the kingdom which had Games somewhat similar to those of Cotswold, though not quite so celebrated; for Heath says, that a carnival of this kind was kept every year, about the middle of July, upon Halgaver-moor, near Bodwin in Cornwall; “resorted to by thousands of people. The sports and pastimes here held were so well liked,” he relates, “by Charles the Second, when he touched here in his way to Sicily, that he became a brother of the jovial society. The custom,” he adds, “of keeping this Carnival is said to be as old as the Saxons.” §

Of the four great rural diversions, Hawking, Hunting, Fowling and Fishing, the first will require the greatest share of our attention, as it is now nearly, if not altogether extinct, and was, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, the most prevalent and fashionable of all amusements.

To the very commencement, indeed, of the seventeenth century, we may point,

* Athenæ Oxon. vol. ii. p. 812.

† They were given him by Endymion Porter, the King’s servant.

‡ Biographical History of England, vol. ii. p. 399, 8vo. edit. of 1775.

§ Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes, p. 20, and Heath’s Description of Cornwall, 1750.

as to the zenith of its popularity and reputation; for although it had been introduced into this country as early as the middle of the eighth century,* it was, until the commencement of the sixteenth, nearly, if not entirely, confined to the highest rank of society. During the reigns of Elizabeth and James, however, it descended from the nobility to the gentry and wealthy yeomanry, and no man could then have the smallest pretension to the character of a gentleman who kept not a cast of hawks. Of this a ludicrous instance is given us by Ben Jonson, in his "Every Man in his Humour:"

"Master Stephen. How does my cousin Edward, uncle?

Knowell. O, well cousse, goe in and see: I doubt he be scarce stirring yet.

Steph. Uncle, afore I goe in, can you tell me, an' he have ere a booke of the sciences of hawking, and hunting? I would faine borrow it.

Know. Why, I hope you will not a hawking now, will you?

Steph. No, cousse; but I'll practise against next yere, uncle. I have bought me a hawke, and a hood, and bells, and all; I lacke nothing but a booke to keepe it by.

Know. O, most ridiculous.

Steph. Nay, looke you now, you are angrie, uncle: why you know, an' a man have not skill in the hawking, and hunting-languages now-a-days, I'll not give a rush for him. They are more studied than the Greeke, or the Latine. He is for no gallant's company without 'hem.—A fine jest ifaith! Slid a gentleman mun show himselfe like a gentleman!"†

That the character of Master Stephen is not, in this respect, overcharged, but represents faithfully the fashionable folly of the age, is evident from many contemporary writers, and especially from that sensible old author Richard Brathwait, who, speaking of dogs and hawks, says,

"They are to be used only as pleasures and recreations, of which to speake sparingly were much better, than onely to discourse of them, *as if our whole reading were in them.* Neither doe I speake this without just cause; for I have noted this fault in many of our younger brood of Gentry, who either for want of education in learning, or their owne neglect of learning, have no sooner attained to the strength of making their fist a pearch for a *hawke*, but by the helpe of some bookes of faulconry, whereby they are instructed in the words of art, they will run division upon discourse of this pleasure: whereas, if at any time they be interrupted by occasion of some other conference, these Highflyers are presently to bee mewed up, for they are taken from their element."

Many of the best books on the Art of Falconry were written, indeed, as might be expected, during this universal rage for the amusement, and the hawking coxcombs of the day, adopting their language on all occasions, became necessarily obtrusive and pedantic in a disgusting degree. Of these manuals the most popular were written by George Turberville, Gervase Markham, and Edmund Best. §

But the most detrimental consequence arising from the universality of this elegant diversion, was the immense expense that attended it, and which frequently involved those who were not opulent in utter ruin: a result not to be wondered

* "About the year 750, Winifrid, or Boniface, a native of England, and archbishop of Mons, acquaints Ethelbald, a king of Kent, that he has sent him one hawk, two falcons and two shields.‡ And Hedilbert, a king of the Mercians, requests the same archbishop Winifrid to send him two falcons which have been trained to kill cranes. See Epistol. Winifrid. (Bonifac.) Mogunt. 1605. 1629. And in Bibl. Patr. tom. vi., and tom. xiii. p. 70."—Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 221.

† Jonson's Works, fol. vol. i. p. 6. act i. sc. 1.

‡ Brathwait's English Gentleman, 2d edit. 1633. p. 220.

§ "The Booke of Faulconrie, or Hawking, for the onely delight and pleasure of all Noblemen and Gentlemen: collected out of the best aucthors, as wel Italians as Frenchmen, and some English practises withall concernyng Faulconrie, the contentes whereof are to be seene in the next page folowyng. By Geo. Turberville, Gentleman. Nocet empta dolore voluptas. Imprinted at London for Chr. Barker, at the signe of the Grashoper in Paules Church-yarde, 1575." To this was added, the "Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting;" and a re-impression of both, "newly revived, corrected, and augmented with many additions proper to these present times," was published by Thomas Purfoot, in 1611.

Gervase Markham published in 1595 the edition of Dame Julyana Barne's Treatise on Hawking and Hunting, which we have formerly noticed, and which was first printed by Caxton, and afterwards by Winkin De Worde; and in 1615, the first edition of his *Country Contentments*, which contains a treatise on Hawking; a work so popular, that it reached thirteen or fourteen editions.

Edmund Best, who trained and sold hawks, printed a treatise on Hawks and Hawking in 1619.

at, when we find, that at the commencement of the seventeenth century, a goss-hawk and a tassel-hawk were not to be purchased for less than a hundred marks; and that in the reign of James I., Sir Thomas Monson gave one thousand pounds for a cast of hawks. Brathwait, in his usual strain of propriety, advises those who are not possessed of good estates, to give up all idea of this diversion, and exposes its indiscriminate pursuit in the following pleasant manner: —

“This pleasure,” observes he, “as it is a princely delight, so it moveth many to be so dearely enamoured of it, as they will undergoe any charge, rather than foregoe it: which makes mee recall to mind a merry tale which I have read, to this effect. Divers men having entered into discourse, touching the superfluous care (I will not say folly) of such as kept dogs and hawkes for hawking; one Paulus a Florentine stood up and spake: Not without cause (quoth hee) did that foole of Millan laugh at these; and being entreated to tell the tale, hee thus proceeded; upon a time (quoth hee) there was a citizen of Millan, a physitian for such as were distracted or lunaticke; who took upon him within a certaine time to cure such as were brought unto him. And hee cured them after this sort: Hee had a plat of ground neere his house, and in it a pit of corrupt and stinking water, wherein he bound such as were mad to a stake, some of them knee deepe, others to the groin, and some others deeper according to the degree of their madnesse, where hee so long pined them with water and hunger, till they seemed sound. Now amongst others, there was one brought, whom he had put thigh-deepe in water; who after fifteen dayes began to recover, beseeching the physitian that he might be taken out of the water. The physitian taking compassion of him, tooke him out, but with this condition, that he should not goe out of the roome. Having obeyed him certaine days, he gave him liberty to walke up and downe the house, but not to passe the out-gate; while the rest of his companions, which were many, remaining in the water, diligently observed the physitian’s command. Now it chanced, as on a time he stood at the gate (for out he durst not goe, for feare he should return to the pit), he beckoned to a yong gentleman to come unto him, who had a hawke and two spaniels, being moved with the novelty thereof; for to his remembrance before he fell mad, he had never seen the like. The yong gentleman being come unto him; Sir (quoth he) I pray you hear meea word or two, and answer mee at your pleasure: What is this you ride on (quoth he) and how do you imploy him? This is a horse (replied he) and I keepe him for hawking. But what call you that you carry on your fist, and how do you use it? This is a hawke (said he) and I use to flie with it at pluver and partridge. But what (quoth he) are these which follow you, what doe they, or wherein do they profit you? These are dogges (said he) and necessary for hawking, to find and retrieve my game. And what were these birds worth, for which you provide so many things, if you should reckon all you take for a whole yeere? Who answering, he knew not well, but they were worth a very little, not above six crownes. The man replied; what then may be the charge you are at with your horse, dogges and hawke? Some fiftie crowns, said he. Whereat, as one wondering at the folly of the yong gentleman: Away, away, Sir, I pray you quickly, and fly before our physitian returne home: for if he find you here, as one that is maddest man alive, he will throw you into his pit, there to be cured with others, that have lost their wits; and more than all others, for he will set you chin-deepe in the water. Inferring hence, that the use or exercise of hawking is the greatest folly, unlesse sometimes used by such as are of good estate, and for recreation sake.

“Neither is this pleasure or recreation herein taxed, but the excessive and immoderate expence which many are at in maintaining this pleasure. Who as they should be wary in the expence of their coine, so much more circumspect in their expence of time. So as in a word, I could wish yong gentlemen never to bee so taken with this pleasure, as to lay aside the dispatch of more serious occasions, for a flight of feathers in the ayre.” *

The same prudent advice occurs in an author who wrote immediately subsequent to Brathwait, and who, though a lover of the diversion, stigmatises the folly of its general adoption.

“As for hawking,” says he, “I commend it in some, condemne it in others; in men of qualitie whose estates will well support it, I commend it as a generous and noble qualitie; but in men of meane ranke and religious men, † I condemne it with Blesensis, as an idle and foolish vanitie; for I have ever thought it a kind of madnesse for such men, to bestow ten pounds in

* Brathwait’s English Gentleman, 2d edit. 1633. p. 201—203.

† Henry Peacham, who remarks of Hawking, that it is a recreation “very commendable and befitting a Noble or Gentleman to exercise,” adds, that “by the Canon Law, Hawking was forbidden unto Clergie.” The Compleat Gentleman, 2d edit. p. 212, 213.

feathers, which at one blast might be blowne away, and to buy a momentary monethly pleasure with the labours and expence of a whole yeare." *

It is to be regretted, however, that the use of the gun has superseded, among the opulent, the pursuit of this far more elegant and picturesque recreation. As intimately connected, for many centuries, with the romantic manners and costume of our ancient nobility and gentry, it now possesses peculiar charms for the poet and the antiquary, and we look back upon the detail of this pastime, and all its magnificent establishment, with a portion of that interest which time has conferred upon the splendid pageantries of chivalry. Of the estimation in which it was held, and of the pleasure which it produced, in Shakspeare's time, there are not wanting numerous proofs: he has himself frequently alluded to it, and the poets Tuberville, Gascoign, and Sydney, have delighted to expatiate on its praises, and to adopt its technical phraseology. But the most interesting eulogia, the most striking pictures of this diversion, appear to us to be derived from a few strokes in Brathwait, Nash, and Massinger; writers who, publishing shortly after Shakspeare's death, and describing the amusement of their youthful days, of course delineate the features as they existed in Shakspeare's age, with as much, if not greater accuracy than the still earlier contemporaries of the bard.

"Hawking," remarks Brathwait, "is a pleasure for high and mounting spirits: such as will not stoop to inferiour lures, having their mindes so farre above, as they scorn to partake with them. It is rare to consider, how a wilde bird should bee so brought to hand, and so well managed as to make us such pleasure in the ayre: but most of all to foregoe her native liberty and feeding, and returne to her former servitude and diet. But in this, as in the rest, we are taught to admire the great goodness and bounty of God, who hath not only given us the birds of the aire, with their flesh to feede us, with their voice to cheere us, but with their flight to delight us." †

"I have in my youthfull dayes," relates Nash, "beene as glad as ever I was to come from Schoole, to see a little martin in the dead time of the yeare, when the winter had put on her whitest coat, and the frosts had sealed up the brookes and rivers, to make her way through the midst of a multitude of fowle-mouth'd ravenous crows and kites, which pursued her with more hydeous cryes and clamours, than did Coll the dog, and Malkin the maide, the Fox in the Apologue.

"When the geese for feare flew over the trees,
And out of their hives came the swarme of bees:"

Chaucer in his Nunes Priests Tale.

and maugre all their oppositions pulled down her prey, bigger than herselfe, being mounted aloft, steeple-high downe to the ground. And to heare an accipitrary relate againe, how he went forth in a cleere, calme, and sun-shine evening, about an houre before the sunne did usually maske himselfe, unto the river, where finding of a mallard, he whistled off his faulcon, and how shee flew from him as if shee would never have turned head againe, yet presently upon a shoote came in, how then by degrees, by little and little, by flying about and about, she mounted so high, untill she had lessened herself to the view of the beholder, to the shape of a pigeon or partridge, and had made the height of the moone the place of her flight, how presently upon the landing of the fowle, shee came downe like a stone and enewed it, and suddenly got up againe, and suddenly upon a second landing came downe againe, and missing of it, in the downcome recovered it, beyond expectation, to the admiration of the beholder, at a long; and to heare him tell a thirde time, how he went forth early in a winter's morning, to the woody fields and pastures to fly the cocke, where having by the little white feather in his taylor discovered him in a brake, he cast of a tassel gentle, and how he never ceased in his circular motion, untill he had recovered his place, how suddenly upon the flushing of the cocke he came downe, and missing of it in the downcome, what working there was on both sides, how the cocke mounted, as if he would have pierced the skies; how the hawke flew a contrary way, untill he had made the winde his friend, how then by degrees he got up, yet never offered to come in, untill he had got the advantage of the higher gound, how then he made in, what speed the cocke made to save himselfe, and what hasty pursuit the hawke made, and how after two long miles flight killed it, yet in killing of it killed himselfe. These dis-

* Vide Quaternio, or a Fourefold Way to a Happie Life, set forth in a Dialogue betweene a Countryman and a Citizen, a Divine and a Lawyer. Per Tho. Nash, Philopolitean, 1633.

† English Gentleman, p. 200.

courses I love to heare, and can well be content to be an eye-witnesse of the sport, when my occasions will permit." *

To this lively and minute detail, which brings the scene immediately before our eyes, we must be allowed to add the poetical picture of Massinger, which, as Mr. Gifford has justly observed, "is from the hand of a great master."

—————"In the afternoon,
For we will have variety of delights,
We'll to the field again, no game shall rise
But we'll be ready for't;—
————— for the pye or jay, a sparrow hawk
Flies from the fist; the crow so near pursued,
Shall be compell'd to seek protection under
Our horses bellies; a hearn put from her siege,
And a pistol shot off in her breech, shall mount
So high, that, to your view, she'll seem to soar
Above the middle region of the air:
A cast of haggard falcons, by me mann'd,
Eying the prey at first, appear as if
They did turn tail; but with their labouring wings
Getting above her, with a thought their pinions
Clearing the purer element, make in,
And by turns bind with her; † the frightened fowl,
Lying at her defence upon her back,
With her dreadful beak, awhile defers her death,
But by degrees forced down, we part the fray,
And feast upon her.—
—————Then, for an evening flight,
A tiercel gentle, which I call, my masters,
As he were sent a messenger to the moon,
In such a place flies, as he seems to say,
See me, or see me not! the partridge sprung,
He makes his stoop; but wanting breath, is forced
To cancelier; ‡ then, with such speed as if
He carried lightning in his wings, he strikes
The trembling bird, who even in death appears
Proud to be made his quarry." §

After these praises and general description of hawking, it will be proper to mention the various kinds of hawks used for this diversion, the different modes of exercising it, and a few of the most interesting particulars relative to the training of the birds.

It will be found, on consulting the "Treatise on Hawking," by Dame Juliana Barnes, printed by Wynkyn De Worde in 1496, the "Gentleman's Academie," by Markham, 1595, and the "Jewel for Gentry," published in 1614, that during this space of time, the species of hawks employed, and the several ranks of society to which they were appropriated, had scarcely, if at all varied. The following catalogue is, therefore, taken from the ancient Treatise:

"An eagle, a bawter (a vulture), a melown; these belong unto an Emperor.
A Gersfalcon: a Tercell of a Gersfalcon are due to a King.
There is a Falcon gentle, and a Tercel gentle; and these be for a Prince.
There is a Falcon of the rock; and that is for a Duke.
There is a Falcon peregrine; and that is for an earl.
Also there is a Bastard; and that hawk is for a baron.
There is a Sacre and a Sacret; and these ben for a knight.
There is a Lanare and a Lanrell; and these belong to a squire.
There is a Merlyon; and that hawk is for a lady.

* Quaternio, 1633. It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add, that the writer of this work must not be confounded with Thos. Nash the author of *Pierce Penniless*, who died before 1606.

† To bind with is to tire or seize.—Gentleman's Recreation.

‡ To cancelier. "Cancelier is when a high-flown hawk in her stooping, turneth two or three times upon the wing, to recover herself before she seizeth her prey."—Gentleman's Recreation.

§ Gifford's Massinger, vol. iv. p. 136, 137.—The *Guardian*, from which this passage is taken, was licensed in October, 1633.

There is an Hoby ; and that hawk is for a young man.

And these *ben* hawks of the *tour* and ben both *illuryd* to be called and reclaimed.

And yet there ben more kinds of hawks.

There is a Goshawk ; and that hawk is for a yeoman.

There is a Tercel ; and that is for a poor man.

There is a Sparehawk ; she is an hawk for a priest.

There is a Muskyte ; and he is for an holy-water clerk." *

To this list the *Jewel for Gentre* adds

A Kesterel, for a knave or servant.

Many of these birds were held in such high estimation by our crowned heads and nobility, that several severe edicts were issued for the preservation of their eggs. These were mitigated in the reign of Elizabeth ; but still if any person was convicted of taking or destroying the eggs of the falcon, gos-hawk or laner, he was liable to suffer imprisonment for three months, and was obliged to find security for his good behaviour for seven years, or remain confined until he did.

Hawking was divided into two branches, land and water hawking, and the latter was usually considered as producing the most sport. The diversion of hawking was pursued either on horseback or on foot : on the former in the fields and open country ; on the latter, in woods, coverts, and on the banks of rivers. When on foot, the sportsman had the assistance of a stout pole, for the purpose of leaping over ditches, rivulets, etc. ; a circumstance which we learn from the chronicle of Hall, where the historian tells us that Henry the Eighth, pursuing his hawk on foot, in attempting to leap over a ditch of muddy water with his pole, it broke, and precipitated the monarch head-foremost into the mud, where, had it not been for the timely assistance of one of his footmen, named John Moody, he would soon have been suffocated ; "and so," concludes the venerable chronicler, "God of hys goodnesse preserved him." †

The game pursued in hawking included a vast variety of birds, many of which, once fashionable articles of the table, have now ceased to be objects of the culinary art. Of those which are now obsolete among epicures may be enumerated, herons, bitterns, swans, cranes, curlews, sheldrakes, cootes, peacocks ; of those still in use, teal, mallard, geese, ducks, pheasants, quails, partridges, plovers, doves, turtles, snipes, woodcocks, rooks, larks, starlings, and sparrows.

Hawking, notwithstanding the occasional fatigue and hazard which it produced, was a favourite diversion among the ladies, who in the pursuit of it, according to a writer of the seventeenth century, did not hesitate to assume the male attire and posture.

"The Bury ‡ ladies," observes he, "that used hawking and hunting, were once in a great vaine of wearing breeches." § The same author has preserved a hawking anecdote of some humour, and which occurred, likewise, at the same place : "Sir Thomas Jermin," he relates, "going out with his servants, and brooke hawkes one evening, at Bury, they were no sooner abroad, but fowle were found, and he called out to one of his falconers, Off with your jerkin ; the fellow being into the wind did not heare him ; at which he stormed, and still cried out, Off with your jerkin, you knave, off with your jerkin ; now it fell out that there was, at that instant, a plaine townsman of Bury, in a freeze jerkin, stood betwixt him and his falconer, who seeing Sir Thomas in such a rage, and thinking he had spoken to him, unbuttoned himself amaine, threw off his jerkin, and besought his worshippe not to be offended, for he would off with his doublet too, to give him content." **

That the training of hawks was a work of labour, difficulty, and skill, and that the person upon whom the task devolved, was highly prized, and supported at a great expense, may be readily imagined. The Falconer was, indeed, an officer of high importance in the household of the opulent, and his whole time was absorb-

* Dibdin's *Typographical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 57, 58.

† Hall's *Life of Henry VIII.* sub an. xvj.

‡ Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk.

§ Anonymous MS., entitled "*Merry Passages and Jeasts.*" Bibl. Harl. 6395. Art. cccliv.

** *Merry Passages and Jeasts*, art. ccxxiii.

ed in the duties of his station. That these were various and incessant may be deduced from the following curious character of a falconer, drawn by a satirist of 1615.*

“ A falkoner is the egge of a tame pullett, hatcht up among hawkes and spaniels. Hee hath in his minority conversed with kestrels and yong hobbies: but growing up he begins to handle the lure, and look a fawlc on in the face. All his learning makes him but a new linguist; for to have studied and practised the termes of Hawke’s Dictionary, is enough to excuse his wit, manners, and humanity. He hath too many trades to thrive; and yet if hee had fewer, hee would thrive lesse. Hee need not be envied therefore, for a monopolie, though he be barber-surgeon, physitian, and apothecary, before he commences hawk-leech; for though he exercise all these, and the art of bow-strings together, his patients be compelled to pay him no further, then they be able. Hawkes be his object, that is, his knowledge, admiration, labour, and all; they be indeed his idoll, or mistresse, be they male or female: to them he consecrates his amorous ditties, which be no sooner framed then hallowed; nor should he doubt to overcome the fairest, seeing he reclaimes such haggards, and courts every one with a peculiar dialect. That he is truly affected to his sweetheart in her fether-bed, appeares by the sequele, himselfe being sensible of the same misery, for they be both mewed up together: but he still chuses the worst pennance, by chusing rather an ale-house, or a cellar, for his moulting place than the hawke’s mew.” †

The training of Hawks consisted principally in the manning, luring, flying and hooding them. Of these, the first and second imply a perfect familiarity with the man, and a perfect obedience to his voice and commands, especially that of returning to the fist at the appointed signal. ‡ The flying includes the appropriation of peculiar game; thus the Faulcon gentle, which, according to Gervase Markham, is the principal of hawks, and adapted either for the field or river, will fly at the partridge or the mallard; the Gerfaulcon will fly at the heron; the Saker at the crane or bittern; the Lanner at the partridge, pheasant, or chooffe; the Barbary Faulcon at the partridge only; the Merlin and the Hobby at the lark, or any small bird; the Goshawk or Tercel at the partridge, pheasant, or hare; the Sparrowhawk at the partridge or blackbird, and the Musket at the bush only. §

The hooding of hawks, as it embraces many technical terms, which have been adopted by our poets, and among the rest, by Shakspeare, will require a more extended explanation, and this we shall give in the words of Mr. Strutt.

“ When the hawk,” he observes, “ was not flying at her game, she was usually hood-winked, with a cap or hood provided for that purpose, and fitted to her head; and this hood was worn abroad, as well as at home. All hawks taken upon ‘*the fist*,’ the term used for carrying them upon the hand, had straps of leather called *jesses*,** put about their legs; the jesses were made sufficiently long, for the knots to appear between the middle and the little fingers of the hand that held them, so that the lunes, or small thongs of leather, might be fastened to them with two tyrrits, or rings; and the lunes were loosely wound round the little finger; lastly, their legs were adorned with bells, fastened with rings of leather, each leg having one; and the leathers, to which the bells were attached, were denominated bewits; and to the bewits was added the creance, or

* The Falconer was sometimes denominated the Ostringer or Sperviter: “ they be called Ostringers,” says Markham, “ which are the keepers of Goshawkes or Tercelles, and those which keepe Sparrow-hawkes or Muskets are called Sperviters, and those which keepe any other kinde of hawke being long-winged are termed Falconers.” Gentleman’s Academie or Book of St. Albans, fol. 8.

† Satyricall Essayes, Characters, &c., by John Stephens, 1615. 16mo. 1st edit.

‡ “ All hawks,” says Markham, “ generally are *manned* after one manner, that is to say, by watching and keeping them from sleep, by a continuall carrying them upon your fist, and by a most familiar stroaking and playing with them, with the wing of a deal fowl, or such like, and by often gazing and looking them in the face, with a loving and gentle countenance, and so making them acquainted with the man.

“ After your hawks are manned, you shall bring them to the *Lure** by easie degrees, as first, making them jump unto the fist, after fall upon the lure, then come to the voice, and lastly, to know the voice and lure so perfectly, that either upon the sound of the one, sight of the other, she will presently come in, and be most obedient; which may easily be performed, by giving her reward when she doth your pleasure, and making her fast when she disobeyeth: short wing’d hawks shall be called to the fist only, and not to the lure; neither shall you use unto them the loudnesse and variety of voice, which you do to the long winged hawks, but only bring them to the fist by chiriping your lips together, or else by the whistle.” Countrey Contentments. 11th edit. p. 30.

§ Country Contentments, p. 29.

** Though it sometimes appears that the jesses were made of silk.

* An object stuffed like that kind of bird which the hawk was designed to pursue. The use of the *lure* was to tempt him back after he had flown.—Steevens.

long thread, by which the bird in tutoring, was 'drawn back, after she had been permitted to fly ; and this was called the reclaiming of the hawk. The bewits, we are informed, were useful to keep the hawks from winding when she baited, that is, when she fluttered her wings to fly after her game. Respecting the bells, it is particularly recommended that they should not be too heavy, to impede the flight of the bird ; and that they should be of equal weight, sonorous, shrill, and musical ; not both of one sound, but the one a semitone below the other ;* they ought not to be broken, especially in the sounding part, because, in that case, the sound emitted would be dull and unpleasing. There is, says the book of St. Albans, great choice of sparrow-hawk bells, and they are cheap enough ; but for gos-hawk bells, those made at Milan are called the best ; and, indeed, they are excellent ; for they are commonly sounded with† silver, and charged for accordingly."‡

Thomas Heywood, in his play, entitled "A Woman killed with Kindness," and acted before 1604, has a passage on falconry, four lines of which have been quoted by Mr. Strutt, as allusive to the toning of the Milan bells ; but as the whole is highly descriptive of the diversion, and is of no great length, we shall venture to transcribe it, with the exception of a few lines, entire :

"*Sir Charles.* So ; well cast off : aloft, aloft ; well flown.

O, now she takes her at the *sowse*, and strikes her down

To th' earth, like a swift thunder clap.—

Now she hath seized the fowl, and 'gins to plume her,

Rebeck her not ; rather stand still and *check* her.

So : seize her *gets*, her *jesses*, and her *bells* ;

Away.

Sir Francis. My hawk kill'd too !

Sir Charles. Aye, but 'twas at the *querre*,

Not at the *mount*, like mine.

Sir Fran. Judgment, my masters.

Cranwell. Your's miss'd her at the *ferre*. §

Wendoll. Aye, but our Merlin first had *plumed* the fowl,

And twice *renew'd* her from the river too ;

Her bells, Sir Francis, had not both one weight,

Nor was one semi-tune above the other :

Methinks these Milain bells do sound too full,

And spoil the mounting of your hawk.—

Sir Fran. ——— Mine likewise seized a fowl

Within her talons ; and you saw her paws

Full of the feathers : both her petty *singles*,

And her long singles griped her more than other ;

The *terrials* of her legs were stained with blood :

Not of the fowl only, she did discomfit

Some of her feathrs ; but she brake away." **

To hawking and the language of falconry, Shakspeare, as we have previously observed, has frequently had recourse, and he has selected the terms with his wonted propriety and effect ; of this five or six instances will be adequate proof. Othello, in allusion to Desdemona, exclaims :

* "These observations are taken from 'The Book of Saint Albans ;' a subsequent edition says, 'at least a note under.' " *

† "I am told, that silver being mixed with the metal, when the bells are cast, adds much to the sweetness of the sound ; and hence probably the allusion of Shakspeare, when he says,

'How silver sweet sound lovers' tongues by night.' "

‡ Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 28.

§ These technical terms may admit of some explanation, from the following passage in Markham's edition of the Booke of St. Albans, 1595, where speaking of the fowl being found in a river or pit, he adds, "if shee (the hawk) nyme or take the further side of the river or pit from you, then she slaieth the foule at *ferre juttie* : but if she kill it on that side that you are on yourselfe, as many times it chanceth, then you shal say she killed the foule at the *jutty ferry* : if your hawke nyme the foule aloft, you shal say she tooke it *at the mount*. If you see store of mallards separate from the river and feeding in the fiede, if your hawke flee covertly under hedges, or close by the ground, by which means she nymeth one of them before they can rise, you shall say, that foule was killed *at the querre*." Gentleman's Academie, fol. 12.

** Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 436.

* This subsequent edition, to which Mr. Strutt alludes, is probably that by Gervase Markham, who tells us under the head of "Hawkes belles," "The belle which your hawke shal weare, looke in any wise that they be not too heavy, whereby they overloade hir, neither that one be heavier than an other, but both of like weight : looke also, that they be well sounding and shrill, yet not both of one sound. *but one at least a note under the other.*" He adds "of spar-hawkes belles there is choice enough, and the charge little, by reason that the store thereof is great. But for goshawks sometimes belles of Millaine were supposed to bee the best, and undoubtedly they be excellent, for that they are sounded with silver, and the price of them is thereafter ; but there be *now*," he observes, "used belles out of the lowe Countries which are approved to be *passing good*, for they are principally *sorted*, they are well sounded, and sweet of ringing, with a pleasant shrilnesse, and excellently well lasting." Gentleman's Academie, fol. 13.

————— “ If I do prove her *haggard*,
Though that her *jesses* were my dear heart-strings,
I’d *whistle her off*, and *let her down the wind*,
To prey at fortune.”

Act iii. sc. 3.

A haggard is a species of hawk wild and difficult to be reclaimed, and which, if not well trained, flies indiscriminately at every bird; a fault to which Shakspeare again refers in his Twelfth Night, where Viola tells the Clown that

“ He must observe their mood on whom he jests —
And, like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye.”

Act iii. sc. 1.

The phrase to whistle off will be best explained by a simile in Burton, which opens his chapter on Air. “ As a long-winged hawk when he is first whistled off the fist, mounts aloft, and for his pleasure fetcheth many a circuit in the air, still soaring higher and higher, till he be come to his full pitch, and in the end when the game is sprung, comes down amain, and *stoops* upon a sudden.” * To let a hawk down the wind, was to dismiss it as worthless.

Petruchio, soliloquising on the means which he had adopted, in order to tame his termagant bride, says emphatically,

“ My falcon now is sharp, and passing empty;
And, till she stoop, she must not be full-gorged,
For then she never looks upon her lure.
Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come, and know her keeper’s call,
That is,—to watch her, as we watch these kites,
That *bate*, and beat, and will not be obedient.”

Act iv. sc. 1.

To *bate* in this passage means to flutter or beat the wings, as striving to fly away, and is metaphorically used in the following address of Juliet to the night :

————— “ Come, civil night,——
Hood my unmann’d blood *bating* in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle.”

Act iii. sc. 2.

The same tragedy furnishes us with another obligation to falconry, where the love-sick maiden recalls Romeo in these terms :

“ Hist ! Romeo, hist ! —— O, for a falconer’s voice
To lure this tassel-gentle back again.”

Act ii. sc. 2.

Falstaff’s page in the Merry Wives of Windsor is appositely compared to the *eyas-musket*, an unfledged hawk of the smallest species :

“ *Mrs. Ford.* How now, my *eyas-musket* ? What news with you ? ”—Act iii. sc. 3.

Eyas-musket, remarks Mr. Steevens, is the same as infant Lilliputian, and he subjoins an illustrative passage from Spenser :

————— “ youthful gay,
Like *eyas-hawke*, up mounts into the skies,
His newly budded pinions to essay.” †

If the commencement of the seventeenth century saw Hawking the most splendid and prevalent amusement of the nobility and gentry, the close had to witness its decline and abolition ; it gave way to a more sure and expeditious, though, perhaps, less interesting mode of killing game, and the adoption of the gun had, before the year 1700, almost entirely banished the art of the Falconer.

The costume of the next great amusement of the country, that of Hunting,

* Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy, fol. 8th edit. p. 152.

† Fairy Queen, book i. cant. 11. stan. 34. “ Eyes, or nias,” says Mr. Douce, “ is a term borrowed from the French *niais*, which means any young bird in the nest, *avis in nido*. It is the first of five several names by which a falcon is called during its first year.” Illustrations, vol. i. p. 74.

differs at present in few essential points from what it was in the sixteenth century. The chief variations may be included in the disuse of killing game in inclosures, and in the adoption of more speed, and less fatigue and stratagem in the open chase; or in other words, it is the strength and speed of the fleet blood-horse, and not of the athletic and active huntsman, or old steady-paced hunter, that now decide the sport.

“In the modern chase,” observes Mr Haslewood, “the lithsomness of youth is no longer excited to pursue the animals. Attendant footmen are discontinued and forgotten; while the active and eager rustic with a hunting pole, wont to be foremost, has long forsaken the field, nor is there a trace of the character known, except in a country of deep clay, as parts of Sussex. Few years will pass ere the old steady paced English hunter and the gabbling beagle will be equally obsolete. All the sport now consists of speed. A hare is hurried to death by dwarf fox-hounds, and a leash murdered in a shorter period than a single one could generally struggle for existence. The hunter boasts a cross of blood, or, in plainer phrase, a racer, sufficiently professed to render a country sweepstakes doubtful. This variation is by no means an improvement, and can only advantage the plethoric citizen, who seeks to combat the somnolency arising from civic festivals by a short and sudden excess of exercise.” *

The mode of hunting, indeed, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, still continued an emblem of, and a fit preparation for, the fatigues of war; nor was it unusual to consider the toils of the chase as initiatory to those of the camp.

“The old Lord Gray, our English Achilles,” says Peacham, “when hee was Deputie of Ireland, to inure his sonnes for the warre, would usually in the depth of winter, in frost, snow, raine, and what weather so ever fell, cause them at midnight to be raised out of their beds, and carried abroad on hunting till the next morning; then perhaps come wet and cold home, having for a breakefast, a browne loafe and a mouldie cheese, or (which is ten times worse) a dish of Irish butter;” †

and Dekkar, in his praise of hunting, remarks, that

“It is a very true picture of warre, nay, it is a warre in itselfe, for engines are brought into the field, stratagems are contrived, ambushes are laide, onsets are given, alarams stricke up, brave encounters are made, fierce assailings are resisted by strength, by courage, or by policie; the enemy is pursued, and the pursuers never give over till they have him in execution, then is a retreat sounded, then are spoiles divided, then come they home wearied, but yet crowned with honour and victorie. And as in battailes, there bee several manners of fight; so in the pastime of hunting, there are several degrees of game. Some hunt the lyon, &c.—others pursue the long-lived hart, the couragious stag, or the nimble footed deere; these are the noblest hunters, and they exercise the noblest game: these by following the chase, get strength of bodie, a free, and undisquieted minde, magnanimitie of spirit, alacritie of heart, and unwearisomnesse to breake through the hardest labours: their pleasures are not insatiable, but are contented to be kept within limits, for these hunt within parkes inclosed, or within bounded forests. The hunting of the hare teaches feare to be bold, and puts simplicitie to her shifts, that she growes cunning and provident;” etc.‡

Hunting in inclosures, that is, in parks, chases, and forests, where the game was inclosed with a fence-work of netting stretched on posts driven into the ground, appears to have been the custom of this country from the time of Edward the Second to the middle of the seventeenth century. The manuscript treatise of William Twici, grand huntsman to Edward the Second, entitled “*Le Art De Venerie, le quel maistre Guillaume Twici venour le roy d’Angleterre fist en son temps per aprendre Autres*,” § the nearly contemporary manuscript translation of John Gyfford, with the title of “*A book of Venerie, dialogue** wise*,” the tract called “*The Maistre of the Game*,” †† in manuscript also, and written by the chief huntsman of Henry the Fourth, for the instruction of his son, afterwards Henry

* *Censura Literaria*, vol. x. p. 231.

† *Complete Gentleman*, 2nd edit., p. 212, 213.

‡ Dekkar’s *Villanies* discovered by lanthorne and candle light, &c. 1616.

§ Vide Warton’s *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. ii. p. 221. note.

** MS. Cotton Library, Vespasianus, B. 12.

†† MS. Digb. 182. Bibl. Bodl. Warton, vol. ii. p. 221. note m.

the Fifth; the "Book of St. Albans," the first printed treatise on the subject, and written by the sister of Lord Berners, when prioress at the nunnery of Sopewell, about 1481; the tract on the "Noble Art of Venerie," annexed to Turberville on Falconrie, 1575, and supposed to have been written by George Gascoigne, and the re-impression of the same in 1611, all describe the ceremonies and preparations necessary for the pursuit of this, now obsolete, mode of hunting, which, from its luxury and effeminacy, forms a perfect contrast to the manly fatigues of the *open* chase.

This style of hunting, indeed, exhibited great splendour and pomp, and was certainly a very imposing spectacle; but the slaughter must have been easy and great, and the sport therefore proportionally less interesting. When the king, the great barons, or dignified clergy, selected this mode of the diversion, in which either bows or greyhounds were used, the masters of the game and the park-keepers prepared all things essential for the purpose; and, if it were a royal hunt, the sheriff of the county furnished stabling for the king's horses, and carts for the dead game. A number of temporary buildings, covered with green boughs, to shade the company from the heat of the sun or bad weather, were erected by the foresters in a proper situation, and on the morning of the day chosen for the sport, the master of the game and his officers saw the greyhounds duly placed, and a person appointed to announce, by the different intonations of his horn, the species of game turned out, so that the company might be prepared for its reception when it broke cover.

The enclosure being guarded by officers or retainers, placed at equal distances, to prevent the multitude prematurely rousing the game, the grand huntsman, as soon as the king, nobility, or gentry had taken their respective stations, sounded three long mootes or blasts with the horn, as a signal for the uncoupling of the hart-hounds, when the game, driven by the manœuvres of the huntsman, passed the lodges where the company were waiting, and were either shot from their bows, or individuals, starting from the group, pursued the deer with greyhounds.*

We find, from the poems of Gascoigne and Turberville, as they appear in their Book of Hunting of 1575, that every accommodation which beautiful scenery and epicurean fare could produce, was thought essential to this branch of the sport. Turberville, describing the scene chosen for the company to take their stations, says—

" The place should first be pight, on pleasant gladsome greene,
Yet under shade of stately trees, where little sunne is seene :
And neare some fountaine spring, whose chrystall running streames
May helpe to coole the parching heate, ycaught by Phœbus beames.
The place appoynted thus, it neyther shall be clad
With arras nor with tapystry, such paltrie were too bad :
Ne yet those hote perfumes, whereof proude courtes do smell,
May once presume in such a place, or paradise to dwell.
Away with fayned fresh, as broken boughes or leaves,
Away, away, with forced flowers, ygathered from their greaves :
This place must of itselfe afforde such sweet delight,
And eke such shewe, as better may content the greedie sight ;
Where sundry sortes of hewes, which growe upon the ground,
May seeme, indeede, such tapystry, as we by arte, have found.
Where fresh and fragrant flowers, may skorne the courtier's cost,
Which daubes himselfe with syvet, muske, and many an ointment lost,
Where sweetest singing byrdes may make such melodye,
As Pan, nor yet Apollo's arte, can sounde such harmonye.
Where breath of westerne windes, may calmlyeld content,
Where casements neede not opened be, where air is never pent.
Where shade may serve for shryne, and yet the sunne at hande,
Where beautie need not quake for colde, ne yet with sunne be tande.

* The substance of this account is taken from "The Maistre of the Game," written for the use of Prince Henry.

In fine and to conclude, where pleasure dwels at large,
Which princes seeke in pallaces, with payne and costly charge.
Then such a place once founde, the *Butler* first appeares,—
Then comes the capitaine *Cooke*—

These gentlemen of the household, it seems, came well provided; the farmer, with wines and ales “in bottles and in barrels,” and the latter with “colde loynes of veale, colde capon, beefe and goose, pigeon pyes, mutton colde, neates tongs poudred well, gambones of the hogge, saulsages and savery knackes.” *

Of the stag-chase in the *open* country, and of the ceremonies and costume attending it, at the castellated mansions of the Baron and opulent Squire, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a tolerably accurate idea may be formed from the following statement, drawn up from the ancient writers on the subject, and from the works of the ingenious antiquary Strutt.

The inhabitants of the castle, and the hunters, were usually awakened very early in the morning by the lively sounding of the bugles, after which it was not unusual for two or more minstrels to sing an appropriate roundelay, beneath the windows of the master of the mansion, accompanied by the deep and mellow chorus of the attending rangers and falconers. Shakspeare alludes to a song of this kind in his *Romeo and Juliet*, † which has been preserved entire by Thomas Ravenscroft, ‡ and commences thus:

“ The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
Sing merrily wee, the hunt is up;
The birds they sing,
The deere they fling:
Hey nony nony-no; &c.”

The Yeoman Keepers, with their attendants, called Ragged Robins, to the number of ten or twelve, next made their appearance, leading the slow-hounds or brachets, by which the deer were roused. These men were usually dressed in Kendal green, with bugles and short hangers by their sides, and quarter-staffs in their hands, and were followed by the foresters with a number of greyhounds led in leashes for the purpose of plucking down the game.

This assemblage in the court of the castle was soon augmented by a number of Retainers, or Yeomen, who received a small annual pension for attendance on these occasions; they wore a livery, with the cognisance of the house to which they belonged, borne, as a badge of adherence, on their arms, and each man had a buckler on his shoulder, and a burnished broad sword hanging from his belt. Shortly afterwards appeared the pages and squires in hunting garbs on horseback and on foot, and armed with spears and long and cross bows; and lastly the Baron, his friends, and the ladies.

The company thus completed, were conducted by the huntsmen to a thicket, in which, they knew, by previous observation, that a stag had been harboured all night. Into this cover the keeper entered, leading his ban-dog (a blood-hound

* Vide *Censura Literaria*, vol. x. p. 237, 238.

† Act iii. sc. 5.

‡ In a work entitled “A Briefe Discourse of the true (but neglected) use of Charact’ring the degrees by their perfection, imperfection, and diminution, in measurable musicke, against the common practice and custome of these times. Examples whereof are exprest in the harmony of 4 voyces, concerning the pleasure of 5 usual Recreations. 1. Hunting. 2. Hawking. 3. Dauncing. 4. Drinking. 5. Enamouring. By Thomas Ravenscroft, Bachelor of Musicke. London, printed by Edw. Allde for Tho. Adams, 1614. Cum privilegio Regali, 4to.”

Puttenham refers to one Gray as the author of this ballad, who was in good estimation, he says, with King Henry, “and afterwards with the Duke of Sommerset Protectour, for making certaine merry ballades, whereof one chiefly was, *The hunte it (is) up*, the hunte is up.” P. 12.

Ritson refers to another ballad, as the prototype of Shakspeare’s line, which, he says, is very old, and commences thus:—

“ The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And now it is almost day;
And he that’s a bed with another man’s wife,
It’s time to get him away.”

Remarks critical and illustrative, &c., 1783, p. 183.

tied in a leam or band), and as soon as the stag abandoned it, the greyhounds were slipped upon him; these, however, after running two or three miles, he usually threw out, by again entering cover, when the slow-hounds and pricklers were sent in, to drive him from his strength. The poor animal now traverses the country for several miles, and after using every effort and manœuvre in vain, exhausted and breathless, his mouth embossed with foam, and the tears dropping from his eyes, he turns in despair upon his pursuers, and in this situation the boldest hunter of the train generally rides in, and, at some risque, dispatches him with a short hunting-sword. The *treble-mort* is then sounded, accompanied by the shouts of the men and the yelping of the dogs, and the huntsman ceremoniously presents his knife to the master of the chase, in order that he may take, as it is termed, the *say* of the deer.*

The danger which the ancient hunter incurred, on dealing the death-stroke to the stag when he turned to bay, is strikingly exemplified by an incident in the life of Wilson the historian, during the time he formed a part of the household of the Earl of Essex, in the reign of Elizabeth.

“ Sir Peter Lee, of Lime, in Cheshire, invited my lord one summer, to hunt the stagg. And having a great stagg in chace, and many gentlemen in the pursuit, the stagg took soyle. And divers, whereof I was one, alighted, and stood with swords drawne, to have a cut at him, at his coming out of the water. The staggs there, being wonderfully fierce and dangerous, made us youths more eager to be at him. But he escaped us all. And it was my misfortune to be hindered of my coming nere him, the way being sliperie, by a fall; which gave occasion to some, who did not know mee, to speak as if I had falne for feare. Which being told me, I left the stagg, and followed the gentleman who first spake it. But I found him of that cold temper, that it seems his words made an escape from him; as by his denial and repentance it appeared. But this made mee more violent in pursuit of the stagg, to recover my reputation. And I happened to be the only horseman in, when the dogs sett him up at bay; and approaching nere him on horsebacke, hee broke through the dogs, and run at mee, and tore my horse's side with his hornes close by my thigh. Then I quitted my horse, and grew more cunning (for the dogs had sette him up akain), stealing behind him with my sword, and cut his hamstrings; and then got upon his back, and cut his throate.”†

* Of the language formerly used by the huntsman to his dogs, a very curious description is given by Markham, in his modernised edition of the Book of St. Albans, 1595.

“ When the Huntsman,” says he, “ commeth to the kennell in the morning to couple up his hounds, and shall *jubet* once or twice to awake the dogs: opening the kennell doore, the Huntsman useth some gentle rating, lest in their hasty comming forth they should hurt one another: to which the Frenchman useth this worde, *Arere, Arere*, and we, *sost, ho ho ho ho*, once or twice redoubling the same, coupling them as they come out of the kennell. And being come into the field, and having uncoupled, the Frenchman useth, *hors de couple avant avant*, once or twice with *soho* three times together: wee use to *jubet* once or twice to the dogges, crying, *a traile a traile, there dogges there*, and the rather to make the dogs in trailing to hold close together striking upon some Brake crie *soho*. And if the hounds have had rest, and being over lustie, doe beginne to fling away, the Frenchmen use to crie, *swef ames swef*, redoubling the same, with *Arere ames ho*: nowe we to the same purpose use to say, *sost ho, heere againe ho*, doubling the same, sometimes calling them backe againe with a *jubet* or hallow: poynting with your hunting staffe upon the ground, saying *soho*.

“ And if some one of the hounds light upon a pure scent, so that by the manner of his eager spending you perceive it is very good, yet shall the same hounds crying, *there, now there*: and to put the rest of the crie in to him, you shall crie, *ho avant avant, list a Talbot, list list there*. To which the French man useth, *Oyes a Talbot le railant oyes oyes, trove le coward*, in the same manner with little difference. And if you find by your hounds where a Hare hath beene at relefe, if it be in the time of greene corne, and if your hounds spend upon the troile merily, and make a goodly crie, then shall the Huntsman blow three motes with his horne which hee may sundry times use with discretion, when he seeth the houndes have made away; A double, and make on towards the seate: now if it be within some field or pasture where the Hare hath beene at relefe, let the Huntsman cast a ring with his houndes to finde where she hath gone out, which if the houndes light upon, he shall crie, *There boyes there, that tat tat, hoe hicke, hicke, hicke avant, list to him list*, and if they chance by their brain sicknesse to overshoot it, he shall call to his hounds, *ho againe ho*, doubling the same twice. And if undertaking it againe, and making it good, hee shall cheare his hounds: *there to him there, thats he, that tat tat*, blowing a mote. And note, that this word *soho* is generally used at the view of any beast of chase or venerie: but indeed the word is properly *saho* and not *soho*, but for the better pronounciation and fulness of the same we say, *soho* not *saho*. Now the hounds running in full chase, the Frenchman useth to say, *ho ho*, or *swef alieu douce alieu*, and wee imitating them say, *There boies, there avant there, to him there*, which termes are in deede derived from their language.”—Gentleman's Academie, fol. 32, 33. These appear to be the terms in use at the close of the sixteenth century: for he afterwards mentions that the “olde and antient Huntsmen had divers terms” which were not in his time “very needefull.”

* Peck's Desiderata Curiosa, vol. ii. p. 464.

A still more difficult and gallant feat, however, of this kind, was performed by John Selwyn, the under-keeper of Queen Elizabeth, who, one day, animated by the presence of his royal mistress, at a chase, in her park of Oatlands, pursued the stag with such activity, that, overtaking it, he sprung from his horse on the animal; when, after most skilfully maintaining his seat for some time, he drew his hunting-sword, and, just as he reached the green, plunged it in the throat of the stag, which immediately dropped down dead at the feet of Elizabeth; an achievement which is sculptured on his monument in Walton church, Surrey, where he is represented in the very act of killing the infuriated beast.*

The taking the say of, and the breaking up, the deer, were formerly attended with many ceremonies and superstitions. † “Touching the death of a deare, or other wylde beast,” says a writer of the sixteenth century,

“Yee knowe your selves what ceremonies they use about the same. Every poore man may cut out an oxe, or a sheepe, whereas such venison may not be dismembered but of a gentylman; who bareheaded, and set on knees, with a knife prepared properly to that use (for every kynde of knife is not allowable), also with certain jestures, cuttes a sunder certaine partes of the wild beasts, in a certain order very circumstantly. Which holy misterie, having seen the lyke yet more than a hundred tymes before. Then (sir) whose happe it bee to eate parte of the fleshe, marylly hee thinkes verily to bee made thereby halfe a gentilman.” ‡

After the process of dismemberment, and the selection of choice pieces, the forester, the keeper, and the hounds had their allotted share, and superstition granted even a portion to the ominous raven.

“There is a little gristle,” relates Tuberville, “which is upon the spoone of the brisket, which we call the raven’s bone; and I have seen in some places a raven so wont and accustomed to it, that she would never fail to croak and cry for it all the time you were in breaking up of the deer, and would not depart till she had it.”

Of this superstitious observance Jonson has given us a pleasing sketch, in the most poetical of his works, the *Sad Shepherd* :—

“*Marian.* — He that undoes him,
Doth cleave the brisket bone upon the spoon,
Of which a little gristle grows — you call it —

Robin Hood. The raven’s bone.

Marian. ————— Now o’er head sat a raven
On a sere bough, a grown, great bird and hoarse,
Who, all the time the deer was breaking up,
So croaked and cried for it, as all the huntsmen,
Especially old Scathlocke, thought it ominous !” §

In an age, when to hawke and to hunt formed the “Gentleman’s Academy,” ** the Falconer and the Huntsman were most important characters; of the former we have already given an outline from contemporary authority, and of the latter the following extract delineates a very curious picture, in which the manners, the dress, and the accoutrements are marked with singular strength and raciness of touch.

“A huntsman is the lieutenant of dogs, and foe to harvest; he is frolick in a faire morning fit for pleasure; and alike rejoyceth with the Virginians, to see the rising sun: he doth worship it as they, but worships his game more than they; and is in some things almost as barbarous. A sluggard he contemnes, and thinks the resting time might be shortened; which makes him rise with day, observe the same pace, and prove full as happy, if the day be happy. The names of foxe, hare, and bucke, be all attracting sillables; sufficient to furnish fiftene meales with long

* Antiquarian Repertory, vol. i. p. 27

† To take the *assay* or *say*, was to draw the knife along the belly of the deer, in order to ascertain how fat he was, and the operation was begun at the brisket.

‡ Chaloner’s *Prayze of Follie*, 1577. The whole process of “undoing the Hart,” may be seen in Markham’s “*Gentleman’s Academie*,” fol. 35.

§ Jonson apud Whalley, act i. sc. 6.

** Alluding to the *Book of St. Albans*, republished, under this title, in 1595, by Gervase Markham.

discourse in the adventures of each. Foxe, drawes in his exploits done against cubbes, bitckfoxes, otters and badgers: hare, brings out his encounters, platformes, engines, fortifications, and night worke done gainst leveret, cony, wilde-cat, rabbet, weasell, and pole-cat: then bucke, the capitaine of all, provokes him (not without strong passion) to remember hart, hind, stagge, doe, pricket, fawne, and fallow deere. He uses a dogged forme of government, which might bee (without shame) kept in humanity; and yet he is unwilling to be governed with the same reason: either by being satisfied with pleasure, or content with ill fortune. Hee hath the discipline to marshall dogs, and sutably; when a wise herald would rather mervaile, how he could distinguish their coates, birth, and gentry. Hee carries about him in his mouth the very soule of Ovid's bodies, metamorphosed into trees, rockes and waters; for, when he pleases, they shall eccho and distinctly answer; and when he pleases, be extremely silent. There is little danger in him towards the common wealth; for his worst intelligence comes from shepherds or woodmen; and that onely threatens the destruction of hares; a well knowne dry meate. The spring and he are still at variance; in mockage therefore, and revenge together of that season, *he weares her livery* in winter. Little consultations please him best; but the best directions de doth love and follow, they are his dogs. If hee cannot prevaile therefore, his lucke must be blamed, for he takes a speedy course. He cannot be less than a conquerour from the beginning, though he wants the booty; for he pursues the flight. His manhood is *a crooked sword with a sawbacke*; but the badge of his generous valour is a horne to give notice. Battery and blowing up, he loves not; to undermine is his stratageme. His physick teaches him not to drinke sweating; in amends whereof, he liquors himselfe to a heate, upon coole bloud, if he delights (at least) to emulate his dog in a hot nose. If a kennel of hounds passant take away his attention and company from church, do not blame his devotion; for in them consists the nature of it, and his knowledge. His frailties are, that he is apt to mistake any dog worth the stealing, and never take notice of the collar. He dreames of a hare sitting, a foxe earthed, or the bucke couchant: and if his fancy would be moderate, his actions might be full of pleasure." *

Making a natural transition from the huntsman to his hounds, we have to remark, that one great object, at this period, in the construction of the kennel, was the modulation and harmony of the vocal powers of the dog. This was carried to a nicety and perfection little practised in the present day. Gervase Markham seems to write *con amore* on this subject, and has penned directions which partake both of the picturesque, and of the melody on which he is descanting: thus, speaking of the production of loudness of cry, he says,

"If you would have your kennel for loudness of mouth, you shall not then choose the hollow deep mouth, but the loud clanging mouth, which sendeth freely and sharply, and as it were redoubleth in utterance: and if you mix with them the mouth that roreth, and the mouth that whineth, the cry will be both the louder and the smarter;—and the more equally you compound these mouths, haveing as many rorers as spenders, and as many whiners as of either of the other, the louder and pleasanter your cry will be, especially, if it be in sounding tall woods, or under the echo of rocks;" and treating of the composition of notes in the kennel, he adds, "you shall as nigh as you can, sort their mouths into three equal parts of musick, that is to say base, counter-tenor and mean; the base are those mouths which are most deep and solemn, and are spent out plain and freely, without redoubling: the counter-tenor are those which are most loud and ringing, whose sharp sounds pass so swift, that they seem to dole and make division; and the mean are those which are soft sweet mouths, that though plain, and a little hollow, yet are spent smooth and freely; yet so distinctly, that a man may count the notes as they open. Of these three sorts of mouths, if your kennel be (as near as you can) equally compounded, you shall find it most perfect and delectable: for though they have not the thunder and loudness of the great dogs, which may be compared to the high wind-instruments, yet they will have the tunable sweetness of the best compounded consorts; and sure a man may find as much art and delight in a lute as in an organ." †

Shakspeare, who frequently avails himself of the language, imagery, and circumstances attendant on this diversion, has particularly noticed, in a passage of much animation and beauty, the care taken to arrange the notes of the kennel, and the pleasure derivable from the varied intonations of the hounds. Theseus addressing Hippolyta, exclaims —

* Satyirical Essayes, &c. by John Stephens, 1615.

† Countrey Contentments, 1615.—11th edit. 1683, p. 7—9.

" My love shall hear the musick of my hounds.—
 Uncouple in the western valley ; go :—
 Despatch, I say, and find the forester.—
 We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
 And mark the musical confusion
 Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. ————— Never did I hear
 Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,
 The skies, the fountains, every region near
 Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard
 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
 So flew'd,* so sanded ;† and their heads are hung
 With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;
 Crook-knee'd, and dew-lap'd like Thessalian bulls ;
 Slow in pursuit, but *match'd in mouth like bells,*
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
 Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn. ‡

It appears from a scene in *Timon of Athens*, and from a passage in Laneham's *Account of the Queen's Entertainment at Kellengworth Castle, 1575*, that it was a common thing, at this period, to hunt after dinner, or in the evening. Timon, having been employed, during the morning, in hunting, says to Alcibiades —

" So soon as dinner's done, forth again ; §

and Elizabeth, twice, during her residence with the Earl of Leicester, is described as pursuing this exercise in the cool of the evening. Honest Laneham's narrative of one of these royal chases will amuse the reader.

" Munday waz hot, and thearfore her Highness kept in till a five a klok in the eevening : what time it pleazz'd her to ride foorth into the chace too hunt the Hart of fors ; which foound anon, and after sore chased, and chafed by the hot pursuit of the hooundes, waz fain of fine fors at last to take soil. Thear to beholl'd the swift fleeting of the deer afore, with the stately cariage of his head in his swimmyng, spred (for the quantitee) lyke the sail of a ship ; the hoounds har-roing after, az had they bin a number of skiphs too the spoyle of a karvell ; the ton no lesse earger in purchaz of his pray, than waz the other earnest in savegard of his life ; so az the earning of the hoounds in continuauns of their crie, the swiftnes of the deer, the running of footmen, the galloping of horsez, the blasting of hornz, the halloing and hewing of the huntsmen, with the excellent echoz between whilez from the woods and waters in valliez resounding ; moved pastime delectabl in so hy a degree, az, for ony parson to take pleazure by moost sensez at onez, in mine opinion, thear can be none ony wey comparable to this ; and special in this place, that of nature iz foormed so feet for the purpoze ; in feith, Master Martin, if ye coold with a wish, I wouold ye had bin at it : Wel, the hart was kild, a goodly deer." **

So partial was Her Majesty to this diversion that even in her seventy-seventh year she still pursued it with avidity ; for Rowland Whyte, one of her courtiers, writing to Sir Robert Sidney on September 12th, 1600, says, " Her majesty is well and excellently disposed to hunting, for every second day she is on horseback, and continues the sport long ;" and when not disposed to incur the fatigue of joining in the chase, she was recreated with a sight of the pastime ; thus at the seat of Lord Montecute, in 1591, she saw, after dinner, from a turret, " sixteen bucks all having fayre lawe, pulled downe with greyhounds in a laund or lawn." ††

Nor was James the First less passionately addicted to the sport ; his journey from Scotland to England, on his accession to the throne of the latter kingdom, was frequently protracted by his inability to resist the temptation of joining in the chase ; on his road to Withrington, the seat of Sir Robert Cary, after a hard ride of thirty-seven miles in less than four hours, " and by the way for a note," says a

* *Flews*, the large chaps of a hound.

† *Sanded*, that is, of a sandy colour, the true denotement of a blood-hound.

‡ *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iv. sc. 1.

§ Act ii. sc. 2.

** Nichols's *Progresses of Elizabeth*, vol. i. Laneham's Letter, p. 12, original edition, p. 17, 18.

†† Nichols's *Progresses*, vol. ii.

contemporary writer, "the miles, according to the northern phrase, are a wey bit longer then they be here in the south,—His Majesty having a little while reposed himself after his great journey, found new occasion to travell further : for, as he was delighting himselfe with the pleasure of the parke, hee suddenly beheld a number of deere neare the place: the game being so faire before him hee could not forbear, but according to his wonted manner, forth he went and slew two of them;" again, "After his Majesties short repast to Werslop his Majestie rides forward, but by the way in the parke he was somewhat stayed; for there appeared a number of huntes-men all in greene; the chiefe of which with a woodman's speech did welcome him, offering his Majestie to shew him some game, which he gladly condescended to see; and with a traine set he hunted a good space, very much delighted." * This diversion from his direct route is repeatedly noticed by the same author, and proves the strong attachment of the monarch to this amusement, which he preferred to either hawking or shooting; he divided his time, says Well-wood, "betwixt his standish, his bottle, and his hunting; the last had his fair weather, the two former his dull and cloudy;"† an assertion which with regard to hunting is corroborated by Wilson, who, recording his visit to his native dominions in 1617, informs us, that on his return he exhibited the same keen relish for the sport which he had shown in 1603 : "The King, in his return from Scotland," he remarks, "made his Progress through the hunting-countries (his hounds and hunters meeting him), Sherwood-Forest, Need-wood, and all the parks and forests in his way, were ransacked for his recreation; and every *night* begat a new *day* of delight." ‡ In short, James was so engrossed by his passion for hunting, that he neglected the most important business to indulge it; and even affected the garb of a hunter when he ought to have been in that of a king. Osborne calls him a Sylvan Prince, and adds, "I shall leave him dressed to posterity in the colours I saw him in the next Progress after his Inauguration, which was as green as the grass he trod on, with a feather in his cap, and a horn instead of a sword by his side."§

To these brief notices of hawking and hunting, it may be necessary to add a very few remarks on the kindred amusements of fowling and fishing, as far as they deviate, either in manner or estimation, from the practice or opinions of the present day. In the pursuit of fowling, indeed, there is little or no discrepancy between the two periods, if we make an exception for two instances; and these now obsolete modes of exercising the art, were termed horse-stalking and bird-batting. The former consisted originally of a horse trained for the purpose, and so mantled over with trappings as to hide the fowler completely from the game; a contrivance much improved upon for facility of usage by substituting a stuffed canvas figure, painted to resemble a horse grazing; this was so light that the sportsman might move it easily with one hand, and behind it he could securely take his aim; to this curious species of deception Shakspeare alludes in *As You Like It*, where the Duke, speaking of Touchstone, says, "He uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that, he shoots his wit;" ** and again, in *much Ado about Nothing*, Claudio exclaims, "Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits." It appears from Drayton, that the fowler shot from underneath his horse, where he was concealed by the mantle-cloth depending to the ground: thus in the "*Polyolbion*,"

"One underneath his horse to get a shoot doth stalk;" ††

* "The true narration of the Entertainment of his Royall Majestie, from the time of his departure from Edenbrough, till his receiving at London; with all or the most special occurrences. Together with the names of those gentlemen whom his Majestie honoured with Knighthood. At London, printed by Thomas Creede, for Thomas Millington, 1603. 4to.

† *Memoirs*, p. 35.

‡ *Wilson's History of Great Britain*, p. 106. fol. London, 1653.

§ *Osborne's Works*, 8vo. ninth edit. 1689. p. 444.

** *Act v. sc. 4*

†† *Chalmers's English Poets*, vol. iv. p. 363. *Poly olbion*, song xxv.

and in the "Muses' Elysium"—

"Then underneath my horse, I stalk my game to strike." *

Sometimes, instead of a stuffed canvas figure, the form of a horse painted on a cloth was carried before the sportsman: "Methinks," says a writer of this period quoted by Mr. Reed, "I behold the cunning fowler, such as I have knowne in the fenne countries and els-where, that doe shoot at woodcockes, snipes, and wilde fowle, by sneaking behind a painted cloth which they carry before them, having pictured in it the shape of a horse; which while the silly fowle gazeth on, it is knockt down with hale shot, and so put in the fowler's budget." †

We have reason to suppose that Henry the Eighth often amused himself in this manner; for in the inventories of his wardrobes, preserved in the Harleian MS., are to be found frequent allowances of materials for making "stalking coats, and stalking hose for the use of his majesty." ‡

Of the peculiar mode of netting called bird-batting, the following account has been given by a once popular authority on these subjects:

"This sport we call in England most commonly bird-batting, and some call it low-belling; and the use of it is to go with a great light of cressets, or rags of linen dipped in tallow, which will make a good light; and you must have a pan or plate made like a lanthorn, to carry your light in, which must have a great socket to hold the light, and carry it before you, on your breast, with a bell in your other hand, and of a great bigness, made in the manner of a cow-bell, but still larger; and you must ring it always after one order. If you carry the bell, you must have two companions with nets, one on each side of you; and what with the bell, and what with the light, the birds will be so amazed, that when you come near them, they will turn up their white bellies: your companions shall then lay their nets quietly upon them, and take them. But you must continue to ring the bell; for if the sound shall cease, the other birds, if there be any more near at hand, will rise up and fly away." §

This method was used to ensnare woodcocks, partridges, larks, etc. and it is probable that to a stratagem of this kind Shakspeare may allude, when he paints Buckingham exclaiming—

"The net has fall'n upon me; I shall perish
Under device and practice." **

Fishing, as an art, has deviated little, in this country, from the state to which it had attained three centuries ago; but it is a subject of interest and amusement, to mark the enthusiasm with which, during the period that we are considering, and anteriorly, this delightful recreation has been discussed, and the minutiae to which its literary patrons have descended.

Of books written on the "Art of Angling" previous to, and during the age of Shakspeare, five, independent of subsequent editions, may be enumerated; and from three of these, the most curious of their kind, we shall quote a few passages indicative of the warm attachment alluded to in the preceding paragraph. The earliest printed production on this subject is "The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle," included, for the first time, in, what may be termed, the second edition of the "Book of St. Albans," namely, "The Treatyse perteynynge to Hawkyng, Huntynge and Fisshynge with an angle," printed at Westminster, by Wynkyn De Worde, 1496. This little tract, which has been attributed, though perhaps not †† correctly, to Dame Juliana Berners, commences with giving a de-

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 458. Nymphal vi.

† New Shreds of the Old Snare, by John Gee, 4to. p. 23.

§ Jewel for Gentry, Lond. 1614.

‡ Harleian MS. 2284.

** Henry VIII. act i. sc. 1.

†† Mr. Haslewood, after much research, attributes to the pen of this ingenious lady only the following portions of De Worde's edition of 1496:

1. A small portion of the treatise on Hawking.
2. The treatise upon Hunting.
3. A short list of the beasts of chase.
4. And another short one of beasts and fowls.

The public are much indebted to this elegant antiquary for an admirable fac-simile reprint of De Worde's rare and interesting volume.

cided preference to fishing when compared with hunting, hawking, and fowling, in the course of which the author observes, that the Angler, if his sport should fail him,

“Atte the leest, hath his holsom walke, and mery at his ease, a swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede floures, that makyth him hungry; he hereth the melodyous armony of fowles; he seeth the yonge swannes, heerons, duckes, cotes, and many other fowles, wyth theyr brodes; wyche me semyth better than all the noyse of houndys, the blastes of hornys, and the cryes of fowlis, that hunters, fawkeners, and foulers can make. And if the Angler take fysshe; surely, thenne, is there noo man merier than he is in his spryte;” * and the book concludes in a singularly pleasing strain of piety and simplicity. “Ye shall not use this forsayd crafty dysporte,” says this lover of fishing, “for no covetysenes, to the encreasyng and sparynge of your money oonly; but pryncypally for your solace, and to cause the helthe of your body, and specyally of your soule: for whanne ye purpoos to goo on your dysportes in fysshynge, ye woll not desyre gretly many persons wyth you, whyche myghte lette you of your game. And thenne ye may serve God, devoutly, in sayenge affectuously youre custumable prayer; and, thus doynge, ye shall eschewe and voyde many vices.”

Of this impression of the “Book of St. Albans” by De Worde, numerous editions were published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and frequently with new titles, as the “Gentleman’s Academie” 1595; the “Jewell for Gentry” 1614, and the “Gentleman’s Recreation” 1674. Two small tracts, however, on angling, possessing some originality, were published by Leonard Mascall, and John Taverner, the former in 1590, and the latter in † 1600; but the most important work on the subject, after the “Treatyse on Fysshynge,” is a poem written by one John Dennys, or Davors, with the following title: “The Secrets of Angling; teaching the choicest Tooles, Baytes, and Seasons for the taking of any Fish, in Pond or River: practised and familiarly opened in three Bookes. By J. D. Esquire.” 8vo. Lond. 1613. This is a production of considerable poetic merit, as will be evident from the author’s eulogium on his art: after reprobating the pastimes of gaming, wantonness, and drinking, he exclaims—

“O let me rather on the pleasant brinke
Of Tyne and Trent possesse some dwelling place,
Where I may see my quill and corke downe sinke
With eager bite of Barbell, Bleike, or Dace:
And on the world and his Creatour thinke,
While they proud Thais painted sheet embrace,
And with the fume of strong tobacco’s smoke,
All quaffing round are ready for to choke.

Let them that list these pastimes then pursue,
And on their pleasing fancies feed their fill;
So I the fields and meadows green may view,
And by the rivers fresh may walke at will,
Among the dazies and the violets blew:
Red hyacinth, and yellow daffodill,
Purple narcissus like the morning rayes,
Pale ganderglas, and azor culverkayes.

I count it better pleasure to behold
The goodly compasse of the lofty skie,
And in the midst thereof like burning gold
The flaming chariot of the world’s great eye;
The watry clouds that in the ayre uprold,
With sundry kinds of painted colours flie;
And faire Aurora lifting up her head,
All blushing rise from old Tithonus bed.

The hils and mountains raised from the plains,
The plains extended levell with the ground,
The ground divided into sundry vains,
The vains enclos’d with running rivers round,
The rivers making way through nature’s chains,
With headlong course into the sea profound:
The surging sea beneath the vallies low,
The vallies sweet, and lakes that lovely flow.

* Burton has introduced, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, though without acknowledgment, the very words of this quotation.—Vide p. 169. 8th edit.

† The titles of these works are—“A Booke of Fishing with Hooke and Line, and of all other Instruments thereunto belonging, made by L. M. 4to. Lond. 1590:” the 4th edit. of Mascall’s Book was reprinted in 1606—“Certain Experiments concerning Fish and Fruit, practised by John Taverner, Gentleman, and by him published for the benefit of others.” 4to. London (printed for Wm. Ponsonby) 1600.—It would appear, from a note in Walton’s *Complete Angler*, that there was an impression of Taverner’s book of the same date with a different title, namely, “Approved experiments touching Fish and Fruit, to be regarded by the lovers of Angling.”—Vide Bagster’s edit. 1808. *Life of Walton*, p. 14. note.

A third was designated “The pleasures of Princes, or Good Men’s Recreations: containing a Discourse of the general Art of Fishing with the Angle, or otherwise: and of all the hidden Secrets belonging thereunto. 4to. Lond. 1614.”

The lofty woods, the forests wide and long Adorn'd with leaves and branches fresh and green, In whose cool brows the birds with chanting song Do welcome with their quire the Summer's Queen, The meadows fair where Flora's guifts among, Are intermixt the verdant grasse between, The silver skaled fish that softly swim Within the brooks and crystall watry brim.	All these and many more of his creation, That made the heavens, the Angler oft doth see, And takes therein no little delectation To thinke how strange and wonderful they bee, Framing thereof an inward contemplation, To set his thoughts on other fancies free : And whiles he looks on these with joyfull eye, His minde is wrapt above the starry skie.*
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The poet has entered so minutely into his task, as to give directions for the colour of the angler's cloaths, which he wishes should be russet or gray ;† and he opens his third book with a descriptive catalogue of the moral virtues and qualities of mind necessary to a lover of the pastime ; these, he informs us, are twelve, namely, faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, courage, liberality, knowledge, placability, piety, temperance, and memory ; an enumeration sufficiently extensive, it might be supposed, to damp the enthusiasm of the most eager disciple ; yet has Gervase Markham, notwithstanding, wonderfully augmented the list. This indefatigable author, in an early edition of his "Countrey Contentments,"‡ converted the poetry of Davors into prose, with the following title : "The whole Art of Angling ; as it was written in a small Treatise in Rime, and now for the better understanding of the Reader put into prose, and adorned and enlarged." The additions are numerous and entertaining, a specimen of which, under the marginal notation of "Angler's vertues," will convey a distinct and curious idea of the estimation in which this art was held in the reign of James the First, and of the moral and mental qualifications deemed essential, at this period, towards its successful attainment.

"Now for the inward qualities of the mind, albeit some writers reduce them to *twelve* heads, which, indeed, whosoever enjoyeth, cannot chuse but be very compleat in much perfection, yet I must draw them into many other branches. The first and most especial whereof is, that a skilful Angler ought to be a general scholler, and seen in all the liberal sciences, as a grammarian, to know how either to write or discourse of his art in true and fitting terms, either without affectation or rudeness. He should have sweetness of speech, to persuade and intice others to delight in an exercise so much laudable. He should have strength of arguments to defend and maintain his profession against envy or slander. He should have knowledge in the sun, moon, and stars, that by their aspects he may guess the seasonableness or unseasonableness of the weather, the breeding of storms, and from what coasts the winds are ever delivered. He should be a good knower of countries, and well used to highwayes, that by taking the readiest paths to every lake, brook, or river, his journies may be more certain, and less wearisome. He should have knowledge in proportions of all sorts, whether circular, square, or diametrical, that when he shall be questioned of his diurnal progresses, he may give a geographical description of the angles and channels of rivers, how they fall from their heads, and what compasses they fetch in their several windings. He must also have the perfect art of numbring, that in the sounding of lakes or rivers, he may know how many foot or inches each severally containeth ; and by adding, subtracting, or multiplying the same, he may yield the reason of every river's swift or slow current. He should not be unskilful in music, that whensoever either melancholy, heaviness of his thoughts, or the perturbations of his own fancies, stirreth up sadness in him, he may remove the same with some godly hymn or anthem, of which *David* gives him ample examples.

* This beautiful encomium has been quoted in Walton's *Complete Angler*, with many alterations, and some of them much for the worse ; for instance, the very opening of the quotation is thus given :—

"Let me live harmlessly ; and near the brink
 Of Trent or Avon *have* a dwelling-place—

and the conclusion of the fourth stanza :—

"The raging sea, beneath the vallies low,
 Where lakes, and rills, and rivulets *do* flow."

Bagster's edit. p. 123.

† Gervase Markham, in his "Art of Angling," not only recommends the same colours, but adds a caution which marks the rural dress of the day : "Let your apparel," says he, "be close to your body, without any new fashioned flashes, or hanging sleeves, waving loose, like sails about you." P. 59.

‡ The first edition of the *Countrey Contentments*, 1615, does not possess the "Art of Angling ;" it probably appeared in the second, a year or two after ; for the work was so popular that it rapidly ran through several impressions : the fifth is dated 1633.

“ He must be of a well settled and constant belief, to enjoy the benefit of his expectation; for then to despair, it were better never to be put in practice: and he must ever think where the waters are pleasant, and any thing likely, that there the Creator of all good things hath stored up much of plenty, and though your satisfaction be not as ready as your wishes, yet you must hope still, that with perseverance you shall reap the fulness of your harvest with contentment: Then he must be full of love both to his pleasure and to his neighbour; to his pleasure, which otherwise will be irksome and tedious, and to his neighbour, that he neither give offence in any particular, nor be guilty of any general destruction: then he must be exceeding patient, and neither vex nor excruciate himself with losses or mischances, as in losing the prey when it is almost in the hand, or by breaking his tools by ignorance or negligence, but with pleased sufferance amend errors, and think mischances instructions to better carefulness.

“ He must then be full of humble thoughts, not disdaining when occasion commands to kneel, lye down, or wet his feet or fingers, as oft as there is any advantage given thereby, unto the gaining the end of his labour. Then must he be strong and valiant, neither to be amazed with storms, nor affrighted with thunder, but hold them according to their natural causes, and the pleasure of the highest: neither must he, like the fox which preyeth upon lambs, employ all his labour against the smaller frey; but like the lyon that seizeth elephants, think the greatest fish which swimmeth, a reward little enough for the pains which he endureth. Then must he be liberal, and not working only for his own belly, as if it could never be satisfied; but he must with much cheerfulness bestow the fruits of his skill amongst his honest neighbours, who being partners of his gain, will doubly renown his triumph, and that is ever a pleasing reward to vertue.

“ Then must he be prudent, that apprehending the reasons why the fish will not bite, and all other casual impediments which hinder his sport, and knowing the remedies for the same, he may direct his labours to be without troublesomeness.

“ Then he must have a moderate contention of the mind to be satisfied with indifferent things, and not out of any avaritious greediness think every thing too little, be it never so abundant.

“ Then must he be of a thankful nature, praising the author of all goodness, and shewing a large gratefulness for the least satisfaction.

“ Then must he be of a perfect memory, quick and prompt to call into his mind all the needfull things which are any way in this exercise to be imployed, lest by omission or by forgetfulness of any, he frustrate his hopes, and make his labour effectless. Lastly, he must be of a strong constitution of body, able to endure much fasting, and not of a gnawing stomach, observing hours, in which if it be unsatisfied, it troubleth both the mind and body, and loseth that delight which maketh the pastime only pleasing.” *

It is impossible to read this elaborate catalogue of qualifications without a smile; for who would suppose that grammar, rhetoric and logic, astronomy, geography, arithmetic and music, were necessary to form an angler: yet we must allow, indeed, even in the present times, that hope, patience, and contentment are still articles of indispensable use to him who would catch fish; for though, as Shakspeare justly observes,

“ The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait,”

Much Ado about Nothing, Act iii. sc. 1.

yet are we so frequently disappointed of this latter spectacle, that the art may be truly considered as a school for the temper, and as meriting the rational encomium of Sir Henry Wotton, a dear lover of the angle in the days of Shakspeare, and who has declared that, after tedious study, angling was “ a rest to his mind, a cheerer of his spirits, a diverter of sadness, † a calmer of unquiet thoughts, a moderator of passions, a procurer of contentedness;” and “ that it begat habits of peace and patience in those that professed and practised it.” “ Indeed, my friend,” adds the amiable Walton, “ you will find angling to be like the virtue of

* *Countrey Contentments*, 11th edit. p. 59.—62.

† To this effect; likewise, Col. Venables gives a decided testimony; for in the preface to his “*Experienc'd Angler*,” first published in 1662, he declares, “ if example (which is the best proof) may sway any thing, I know no sort of men less subject to melancholy than anglers, many have cast off other recreations and embraced it, but I never knew any angler wholly cast off (though occasions might interrupt) their affections to their beloved recreation;” and he adds, “ if this art may prove a noble brave rest to my mind, 'tis all the satisfaction I covet.”

humility; which has a calmness of spirit, and a world of other blessings, attending upon it." *

A rural diversion of a kind very opposite to that of angling, namely, Horse-racing, may be considered, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, if we compare it with the state to which the rage for gambling has since carried it, as still in its infancy. It was classed, indeed, with hawking and hunting, as a liberal pastime, and almost generally pursued for the mere purposes of exercise or pleasure; hence the moral satirists of the age, the Puritans of the sixteenth century, have recommended it as a substitute for cards and dice. That it was, however, even at this period, occasionally practised in the spirit of the modern turf, will be evident from the authority of Shakspeare, who says,

————— "I have heard of riding wagers,
Where horses have been nimbler than the sands
That run i'the clock's behalf;" *Cymbeline*, act iii. sc. 2.

and Burton, who wrote at the close of the Shakspearean era, mentions the ruinous consequences of this innovation: "Horse-races," he observes, "are desports of great men, and good in themselves, though many gentlemen by such means gallop quite out of their fortunes." †

To encourage, however, a spirit of emulation, prizes were established for the swiftest horses, and these were usually either silver bells or silver cups; from the prevalence of the former, the common term for horse-races in the time of James I. was bell-courses, an amusement which became very frequent in the reign of this prince, and, though the value of the prize did not amount to more than eight or ten pounds, and the riders were for the most part the owners of the horses, attracted a numerous concourse of spectators.

The estimation in which the breed of race-horses was held, even in the age of Elizabeth, may be drawn from a passage in one of the satires of Bishop Hall, first published in 1597:—

————— "Dost thou prize
Thy brute beasts worth by their dam's qualities?
Say'st thou this colt shall prove a swift pac'd steed,
Onely because a Jennet did him breed?
Or say'st thou this same horse shall win the prize,
Because his dam was swiftest Trunchifice
Or Runceval his syre; himself a galloway?
While like a tireling jade, he lags half way." ‡

While on this subject, we may remark, that the Art of Riding was, during the era we are contemplating, carried to a state of great perfection;

"To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,
And witch the world with noble horsemanship,"

was the pursuit of every eager and aspiring spirit, and various treatises were written to facilitate the attainment of an accomplishment at once so useful and so fashionable. Among these, the pieces of Gervase Markam may be deemed the best; indeed, his earliest work on the subject, which is dated 1593, claims to be the first ever written in this country on the art of training Running-horses;§ and

* Walton's Complete Angler apud Bagster, p. 122.—"Let me take this opportunity," says Mr. Bowles, "of recommending the amiable and venerable Isaac Walton's Complete Angler; a work the most singular of its kind, breathing the very spirit of contentment, of quiet, and unaffected philanthropy, and interspersed with some beautiful relics of poetry, old songs, and ballads." *Bowles's Pope*, vol. i. p. 135.

† Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 170. part ii. sat. 2. Mem. iv.

‡ Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 275. book iv. satire 3.

§ The title is as follows: "A Discourse of Horsemanshippe: wherein the breeding and ryding of Horses for service, in a breefe manner is more methodically sette downe then hath been heretofore, &c. Also the manner to chuse, trayne, ryde and dyet, both Hunting-horses and Running-horses: with all the secretes thereto belonging discovered. An arte never hearetofore written by any authour. Brama assai, poco spero, nulla chiegio. At London. Printed by John Charlewood for Richard Smith, 1593, 4to. Dedicated "To the

is supposed also to be the first production of Markham: it went through many impressions under various titles, and from one of these termed *Cavelarice*, printed in 1607, I shall select a minutely curious picture of the "horseman's apparel."

"First, when you begin to learne to ride, you must come to the stable, in such decent and fit apparel, as is meet for such an exercise, that is to say, a hat which must sit close and firme upon your heade, with an indifferent narrow verge or brim, so that in the saults or bounds of the horse, it may neither through widenesse or unweldinesse fall from your head, nor with the bredth of the brim fall into your eies, and impeach your sight, both which are verie grosse errors: About your neck you shall weare a falling band, and no ruffe, whose depth or thicknesse, may, either with the winde, or motions of your horse, ruffell about your face; or, according to the fashion of the Spaniards, daunce hobby-horse-like about your shoulders, which though in them is taken for a grace, yet in true judgment it is found an errour. Your doublet shal be made close and handsome to your bodie, large wasted, so that you may ever be sure to ride with your points trussed (for to ride otherwise is most vilde) and in all parts so easye, that it may not take from you the use of anie part of your bodie. About your waste you must have ever your girdle and thereon a smal dagger or punniard, which must be so fast in the sheath that no motion of the horse may cast it forth, and yet so readie, that upon any occasion you may draw it. Your hose would be large, rounde, and full, so that they may fill your saddle, which should it otherwise be emptie and your bodie looke like a small substance in a great compasse, it were wondrous uncomely. Your bootes must be cleane, blacke, long, and close to your legge, comming almost up to your middle thigh, so that they may lie as a defence betwixt your knee and the tree of your saddle. Your boote-hose must come some two inches higher then your bootes, being hansomely tied up with pointes. Your spurres must be strong and flat inward, bending with a compasse under your ancle: the neck of your spurre must be long and straight, and rowels thereof longe and sharp, the prickes thereof not standing thicke together, nor being above five in number. Upon your handes you must weare a handsome paire of gloves, and in your right hande you must have a long rodde finely rush-growne, so that the small hande thereof be hardly so great as a round packe-thread, insomuch that when you move or shake it, the noyes thereof may be lowde and sharpe." *

Having thus noticed the great rural diversions of this period, as far as they deviate from modern practice, the remainder of the chapter will be occupied by such minor amusements of the country as may now justly be considered obsolete; for it must be recollected, to enumerate only what is peculiar to the era under consideration, forms the object of our research. It should, likewise, here be added, that those amusements which are equally common to both country and town, will find their place under the latter head, such as cards, dice, the practice of archery, baiting, etc. etc.

Among the amusements generally prevalent in the country, Burton has included the Quintain. This was originally a mere martial sport; and, as Vegetius informs us, familiar to the Romans, from an individual of which nation, named Quintus, it is supposed to have derived its etymology. During the early feudal ages of modern Europe it continued to support its military character, was practised by the higher orders of society, and preceded, and probably gave origin to tilting, justs, and tournaments. These, however, as more elegant and splendid in their costume, gradually superseded it during the prevalence of chivalry; it then became an exercise for the middle ranks, for burgesses and citizens, and at length, towards the close of the sixteenth century, degenerated into a mere rustic sport.

It would appear, from comparing Stowe with Shakspeare, that about the year 1600, the Quintain was made use of under two forms; the most simple consisting of a post fixed perpendicularly in the ground, on the top of which was a cross-bar turning upon a pivot or spindle, with a broad board nailed at one end and a bag of sand suspended at the other; at the board they ran on horseback with spears

Right Worshipfull, and his singular good father, Ma. Rob. Markham, of Cotham, in the County of Nottingham, Esq. by Jervis Markham. Licensed 29 January, 1592-3." Vide Herbert, v. 2. 1102.

* *Cavelarice*, or the arte and knowledge belonging to the Horse-ryder, 1607. Book ii. chap. 24.

or staves and "hee," says Stowe, "that hit not the broad end of the quinten was of all men laughed to scorne; and hee that hit it full, if he rid not the faster, had a sound blow in his necke with a bagge full of sand hanged on the other end." * A more costly and elaborate machine, resembling the human form, is alluded to by Shakspeare in *As You Like It*, where Orlando says,

—————" My better parts
Are all thrown down; and that which here stands up,
Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block." Act 1. sc. 2.

In Italy, Germany, and Flanders a quintain, carved in wood in imitation of the human form, was, during the sixteenth century, in common use. † The figure very generally represented a Saracen, armed with a shield in one hand, and a sword in the other, and, being placed on a pivot, the skill of those who attacked it, depended on shivering the lance to pieces between the eyes of the figure; for if the weapon deviated to the right or left, and especially if it struck the shield, the quintain turned round with such velocity as to give the horseman a violent blow on the back with his sword, a circumstance which covered the performer with ridicule, and excited the mirth of the spectators. That such a machine, termed the shield quintain, was used in Ireland during the reign of Richard the Second, we have the authority of Froissart; it is therefore highly probable, that this species of the diversion was as common in England, and still lingered here in the reign of Elizabeth; and that to a quintain of this kind, representing an armed man, and erected for the purpose of a military exercise, Shakspeare alludes in the passage just quoted.

It must, however, be allowed, that at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and for several years anterior, the quintain had almost universally become the plaything of the peasantry, and was seldom met with but at rural weddings, wakes, or fairs; or under any other form than that which Stowe has described. No greater proof of this can be given than the fact, that when Elizabeth was entertained at Kenelworth Castle, in 1575, with an exact representation of a Country Bridale, a quintain of this construction formed a part of it. "Marvelous," says Laneham, "were the martial acts that were done there that day; the bridegroom for pre-eminence had the first course at the Quintaine, brake his spear treshardiment; but his mare in his manage did a little so titubate, that much ado had his manhood to sit in his saddle, and to scape the foil of a fall: With the help of his hand, yet he recovered himself, and lost not his stirrups (for he had none to his saddle); had no hurt as it hapt, but only that his girth burst, and lost his pen and inkhorn that he was ready to weep for; but his handkerchief, as good hap was, found he safe at his girdle; that cheered him somewhat, and had good regard it should not be filed. For though heat and coolness upon sundry occasions made him sometime to sweat, and sometime rheumatic; yet durst he be bolder to blow his nose and wipe his face with the flappet of his father's jacket, than with his mother's muffler: 'tis a goodly matter, when youth is manly brought up, in fatherly love and motherly awe.

"Now, Sir, after the bride-groom had made his course, ran the rest of the band a while, in some order; but soon after, tag and rag, cut and long tail; where the specialty of the sport was to see how some for his slackness had a good bob with the bag; and some for his haste to topple down right, and come tumbling to the post: Some striving so much at the first setting out, that it seemed a question between the man and the beast, whether the course should be made a horseback or a foot: and put forth with the spurs, then would run his race by us among the thickest of the throng, that down came they together hand over head. Another, while he directed his course to the quintaine, his jument would carry him to a mare among the people; so his horse as amorous as himself adventurous: An other, too, run and miss the quintaine with his staff, and hit the board with his head!

* Survey of London, 4to. 1618, p. 145.

† Vide Pluvinel sur l'exercice de monter à cheval, part iii. p. 177. et *Traité des Tournois, Joustes, &c.* par Claude Fran. Menestrier, p. 264.

“Many such gay games were there among these riders : who by and by after, upon a greater courage, left their quintaining, and ran one at another. There to see the stern countenances, the grim looks, the couragious attempts, the desperate adventures, the dangerous courses, the fierce encounters, whereby the buff at the man, and the counterbuff at the horse, that both sometime came toppling to the ground. By my troth, Master Martin, ’twas a lively pastime; I believe it would have moved some man to a right merry mood, though it had been told him his wife lay a dying.” *

This passage presents us with a lively picture of what the rural quintain was in the days of Elizabeth, an exercise which continued to amuse our rustic forefathers for more than a century after the princely festival of Kenelworth. Minshieu, who published his Dictionary in 1617, the year subsequent to Shakspeare’s death, informs us that “A quintaine or quintelle,” was “a game in request at marriages, when Jac and Tom, Dic, Hob and Will, strive for the gay garland.” Randolph in 1642, alluding in one of his poems to the diversions of the Spaniards, says

“Foot-ball with us may be with them balloone;
As they at *tilts*, so we at *quintaine* runne;
And those old pastimes relish best with me,
That have least art, and most simplicitie;”

Plott in his History of Oxfordshire, first printed in 1677, mentions the Quintain as the common bridal diversion of the peasantry at Deddington in that county; “it is now,” he remarks, “only in request at marriages, and set up in the way for young men to ride at as they carry home the bride, he that breaks the board being counted the best man;” † and in a satire published about the year 1690, under the title of “The Essex Champion; or the famous History of Sir Billy of Billerecay, and his Squire Ricardo,” intended as a ridicule, after the manner of Cervantes, on the romances then in circulation, the hero, Sir Billy, is represented as running at a quintain, such as Stowe has drawn in his Survey, but with the most unfortunate issue, for “taking his launce in his hand, he rid with all his might at the Quinten, and hitting the board a full blow, brought the sand-bag about with such force, as made him measure his length on the ground.” ‡

Most of the numerous athletic diversions of the country remaining what they were two centuries ago, cannot, in accordance with our plan, require any comment or detail; two, however, now, we believe, entirely obsolete, and which serve to mark the manners of the age, it will be necessary to introduce. Mercutio, in a contest of pleasantry and banter with Romeo, exclaims, “Nay, if thy wits run the wild-goose chase, I have done.”

This barbarous species of horse-race, which has been named from its resemblance to the flight of wild-geese, was a common diversion among the country-gentlemen of this period; Burton, indeed, calls it one of “the disports of great men;” § a confession which does no honour to the age, for this elegant amusement consisted in two horses starting together, and he who proved the hindmost rider was obliged to follow the foremost over whatever ground he chose to carry him, that horse which could distance the other winning the race.

Another sport still more extraordinary and rude, and much in vogue in the south-western counties, was one of the numerous games with the ball, and termed Hurling. Of this there were two kinds, “hurling to the goales” and “hurling to the country,” and both have been described with great accuracy by Carew, in his Survey of Cornwall. The first is little more than a species of hand-ball, but the second, when represented as the amusement of gentlemen, furnishes a curious picture of the civilisation of the times.

“In hurling to the country,” says Carew, “two or three, or more parishes agree to hurl against two or three other parishes. The matches are usually made by gentlemen, and their

* Nichols’s Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. and Laneham’s Letter, p. 30—32.

† Natural Hist. of Oxfordshire, p. 200.

§ Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. p. 170.

‡ Censura Literaria, vol. viii. p. 233, 234.

goales are either those gentlemen's houses, or some towns or villages three or four miles asunder, of which either side maketh choice after the nearnesse of their dwellings; when they meet, there is neyther comparing of numbers nor matching of men, but a silver ball is cast up, and that company which can catch and carry it by force or slight to the place assigned, gained the ball and the victory.—Such as see where the ball is played give notice, crying 'ware east,' 'ware west,' as the same is carried. The hurlers take their next way over hilles, dales, hedges, ditches; yea, and thorow busches, briars, mires, plashes, and rivers whatsoever, so as you shall sometimes see twenty or thirty lie tugging together in the water scrambling and scratching for the ball." *

The domestic amusements in the country being nearly, if not altogether, the same with those which prevailed in the city, we shall, with one exception, refer the consideration of them to another part of this work. The pastime for which this distinction is claimed, was known by the name of Shovel-board, or Shuffle-board, and was so universally prevalent throughout the kingdom, during the era of which we are treating, that there could scarcely be found a nobleman's or gentleman's house in the country in which this piece of furniture was not a conspicuous object. The great hall was the place usually assigned for its station, though in some places, as, for instance, at Ludlow Castle, a room was appropriated to this purpose, called the Shovell-Board Room.†

The table necessary for this game, now superseded by the use of Billiards, was frequently upon a very large and expensive scale.

"It is remarkable," observes Dr. Plott, "that in the hall at Chartley the shuffle-board table, though ten yards one foot and an inch long, is made up of about two hundred and sixty pieces, which are generally about eighteen inches long, some few only excepted, that are scarce a foot; which, being laid on longer boards for support underneath, are so accurately joined and glewed together, that no shuffle-board whatever is freer from rubbs or casting.—There is a joynt also in the shuffle-board at Madeley Manor exquisitely well done." ‡

The mode of playing at Shovel-board is thus described by Mr. Strutt:—

"At one end of the shovel-board there is a line drawn across, parallel with the edge, and about three or four inches from it; at four feet distance from this line another is made, over which it is necessary for the weight to pass when it is thrown by the player, otherwise the go is not reckoned. The players stand at the end of the table, opposite to the two marks above mentioned, each of them having four flat weights of metal, which they shove from them, one at a time, alternately: and the judgment of the play is, to give sufficient impetus to the weight to carry it beyond the mark nearest to the edge of the board, which requires great nicety, for if it be too strongly impelled, so as to fall from the table, and there is nothing to prevent it, into a trough placed underneath for its reception, the throw is not counted; if it hangs over the edge, without falling, three are reckoned towards the player's game; if it lie between the line and the edge, without hanging over, it tells for two; if on the line, and not up to it, but over the first line, it counts for one. The game, when two play, is generally eleven; but the number is extended when four, or more, are jointly concerned." §

It appears from a passage in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, that, in Shakspeare's time, the broad shillings of Edward VI. were made use of at shovel-board instead of the more modern weights. Falstaff is enquiring of Pistol if he picked master Slender's purse, a query to which Slender thus replies: "Ay, by these gloves, did he (or I would I might never come in mine own great chamber again else), of seven groats in mill-sixpences, and two Edward shovel-boards, that cost me two shillings and two-pence a-piece of Yead Miller, by these gloves." "That Slender means the broad shilling of one of our kings," remarks Mr. Malone, "appears from comparing these words with the corresponding passage in the old quarto: 'Ay by this handkerchief did he;—two faire shovel-board shillings, besides seven groats in mill-sixpences.'"

Mr. Douce is of opinion that the game of shovel-board is not much older than the reign of Edward VI., and that it is only a variation, on a larger scale, of what was term'd Shove-groat, a game invented in the reign of Henry VIII., and

* Carew's Survey of Cornwall, 1602, book i. p. 74.

† Natural History of Staffordshire, p. 383.

‡ Vide Todd's Milton, 2d. edit. vol. vi. p. 192.

§ Sports and Pastimes, p. 264.

described in the statutes, of his 33d year, as a new game. * Shove-groat was also played, as the name implies, with the coin of the age, namely silver groats, then as large as our modern shillings, and to this pastime and to the instrument used in performing it, Shakspeare likewise, and Jonson, allude; the first in the Second Part of King Henry IV., where Falstaff, threatening Pistol, exclaims, "Quoit him down, Bardolph, like a Shove-groat shilling:" the second in Every Man in his Humour, where Knowell, speaking of Brain-worm, says that he has "translated begging out of the old hackney pace, to a fine easy amble, and made it run as smooth off the tongue as a shove-groat shilling." † That the game of Shovel-board is subsequent, in point of time, to the diversion of Shove-groat, is probable from the circumstance noticed by Mr. Douce, that no coin termed shovel-groat is any where to be found, and consequently the era of the broad shilling may be deemed that also of shovel-board. Mr. Strutt supposes the modern game of Justice Jervis to resemble, in all essential points, the ancient Shove-groat. ‡

Between the juvenile sports which were common in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and those of the present day, little variation or discrepancy, worth noticing, can be perceived; they were, under slight occasional alterations of form and name, equally numerous, trifling, or mischievous, and Shakspeare has now and then referred to them, for the purposes of illustration or similitude; he has, in this manner, alluded to the well-known games of leap-frog; § handydandy; ** wildmare, or balancing; †† flap-dragons; ‡‡ loggats, or kittlepins; §§ country-base, or prisoner's bars; *** fast and loose; ††† nine men's morris, or five-penny morris; ‡‡‡ cat in a bottle; §§§ figure of eight, **** etc. etc.; games which, together with those derived from balls, marbles, hoops, etc. require no description, and which, deviating little in their progress from age to age, can throw no material light on the costume of early life. Very few diversions, indeed, peculiar to our youthful days have become totally obsolete; among these, however, may be mentioned one, which, from the obscurity resting on it, its peculiarity, and former popularity, is entitled to some distinction. We allude to the diversion of barley-breake, of the mode of playing which, Mr. Strutt confesses himself ignorant, and merely quotes the following lines from Sidney, as given by Johnson in his Dictionary:

"By neighbours prais'd, she went abroad thereby,
At barley-breake her sweet swift feet to try." ††††

Barley-breake was, however, among young people, one of the most popular amusements of the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First, and continued so until the austere zeal of the Puritans occasioned its suppression: thus Thomas Randall, in "An Eclogue" on the diversions of Cotswold Hills, complains that

"Some melancholy swaines, about have gone,
To teach all zeale, their owne complection—
These teach that dauncing is a Jezabell,
And Barley-breake the ready way to hell." ‡‡‡‡

Before this puritanical revolution took place, barley-breake was a common theme with the amatory bards of the day, and allusions to it were frequent in their songs, madrigals, and ballets. With one of these, written about 1600, we shall present the reader, as a pleasing specimen of the light poetry of the age:—

* Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 454, 455.

† Whalley's Works of Ben Jonson, vol. i.

§ Henry V., act v. sc. 2.

†† Second Part of Henry IV., act ii. sc. 4.

‡‡ Love's Labour Lost, act v. sc. 1. and Second Part of Henry IV., act. ii. sc. 4.

§§ Hamlet, act v. sc. 1.

††† Anthony and Cleopatra, act iv. sc. 10.

§§§ Much Ado about Nothing, act i. sc. 1.

†††† Sports and Pastimes, p. 328.

‡ Vide Sports and Pastimes, p. 267. edit. of 1810.

** Lear, act iv. sc. 6.

*** Cymbeline, act v. sc. 3.

††† Midsummer-Night's Dream, act ii. sc. 2.

**** Ibid. act ii. sc. 2.

†††† Annalia Dubrensis, 1636, c. iii.

" Now is the month of maying,
When merry lads are playing;
Each with his bonny lasse,
Upon the greeny grasse.

The spring clad all in gladnesse
Doth laugh at winter's sadnesse;
And to the bagpipe's sound,
The nymphs tread out their ground.

Fye then, why sit wee musing,
Youth's sweet delight refusing;
Say daintie Nymphs and speake,
Shall wee play *barly-breake*."*

There were two modes of playing at barley-breake, and of these one was rather more complex than the other. Mr. Gifford, in a note on the "*Virgin-Martyr*" of Massinger, where this game, in its more elaborate form, is referred to, remarks, that

" With respect to the amusement of barley-break, allusions to it occur repeatedly in our old writers; and their commentators have piled one parallel passage upon another, without advancing a single step towards explaining what this celebrated pastime really was. It was played by six people (three of each sex), who were coupled by lot. A piece of ground was then chosen, and divided into three compartments, of which the middle one was called hell. It was the object of the couple condemned to this division, to catch the others, who advanced from the two extremities; in which case a change of situation took place, and hell was filled by the couple who were excluded by pre-occupation, from the other places. In this 'catching,' however, there was some difficulty, as, by the regulations of the game, the middle couple were not to separate before they had succeeded, while the others might break hands whenever they found themselves hard pressed. When all had been taken in turn, the last couple was said to be in hell, and the game ended."†

That this description, explanatory of the passage in Massinger,

" He is at barley-break, and the last couple
Are now in hell,"

is accurate and full, will derive corroboration from a scarce pamphlet entitled "*Barley-breake, or a Warning for Wantons*," published in 1607, and which contains a curious representation of this amusement.

———— " On a time the lads and lasses came,
Entreating Elpin that she ‡ might goe play;
He said she should (Euphema was her name)
And then denyes: yet needs she must away.

To Barley-breake they roundly then 'gan fall,
Raimon, Euphema had unto his mate;
For by a lot he won her from them all;
Wherefore young Streton doth his fortune hate.

But yet ere long he ran and caught her out,
And on the back a gentle fall he gave her;
It is a fault which jealous eyes spie out,
A maide to kisse before her jealous father.

Old Elpin smiles, but yet he frets within,
Euphema saith, she was unjustly cast.
She strives, he holds, his hand goes out and in;
She cries, away! and yet she holds him fast.

Till sentence given by an other maid,
That she was caught according to the law;
The voice whereof this civill quarrell staid,
And to his mate each lusty lad 'gan draw.

Euphema now with Streton is in hell,
(For so the middle roome is alwaies cald)
He would for ever, if he might, there dwell;
He holds it blisse with her to be inthralld.

The other run, and in their running change;
Streton 'gan catch, and then let goe his hold;
Euphema like a doe, doth swiftly range,
Yet taketh none, although full well she could,

And winkes on Streton, he on her 'gan smile,
And faine would whisper something in her eare;
She knew his mind, and bid him use a wile,
As she ran by him, so that that none did heare."§

* Cantus of Thomas Morley, the first booke of ballets to five voyces.

† Massinger's Works, by Gifford, vol. i. p. 104.

‡ His daughter.

§ "*Barley-breake, or a warning for Wantons*. Written by W. N., Gent. Printed at London by Simon Stafford, dwelling in the Cloth-fayre, neere the Red Lyon, 1607. 4to. 16 leaves." Vide British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. 65.—This poem has been attributed, notwithstanding the initials, to Nicholas Breton.

The simpler mode of conducting this pastime, as it was practised in Scotland, has been detailed by Dr. Jamieson, who tells us, that it was “a game generally played by young people in a corn-yard. One stack is fixed on as the *dule*, or goal; and one person is appointed to catch the rest of the company, who run out from the dule. He does not leave it till they are all out of his sight. Then he sets off to catch them. Any one who is taken cannot run out again with his former associates, being accounted a prisoner; but is obliged to assist his captor in pursuing the rest. When all are taken, the game is finished; and he who was first taken is bound to act as catcher in the next game.” * It is evident, from our old poetry, that this style of playing at barley-breake was also common in England, and especially among the lower orders in the country.

It may be proper to add, at the close of this chapter, that a species of public diversion was, during the Elizabethan period, supported by each parish, for the purpose of innocently employing the peasantry upon a failure of work from weather or other causes. To this singular though laudable custom Shakspeare alludes in the Twelfth Night, where Sir Toby says, “He’s a coward, and a coys-tril, that will not drink to my niece, ’till his brains turn o’ the toe like a *parish-top*.” “This,” says Mr. Steevens, “is one of the customs now laid aside;” and he adds, in explanation, that “a large top was kept in every village, to be whipped in frosty weather, that the peasants might be kept warm by exercise, and out of mischief, while they could not work;” a diversion to which Fletcher likewise refers in his “Night-Walker,” and which has given rise to the proverbial expression of *sleeping like a town-top*.

From this rapid sketch of the diversions of the country, as they existed in Shakspeare’s time, it will be immediately perceived that not many have become obsolete, and of those which have undergone some change, the variations have not been such as materially to obscure their origin or previous constitution. The object of this chapter being, therefore, only to mark what was peculiar in rural pastime to the age under consideration, and not to notice what had suffered little or no modification, its articles, especially if we consider the nature of the immediately preceding section (and that nearly all amusements common to both town and country were referred to a future part), could not be either very numerous, or require any very extended elucidation.

What might be necessary in the minute and isolated task of the commentator, would be tedious and superfluous in a design which professes, while it gives a distinct and broad outline of the complexion of the times, to preserve among its parts an unrelaxed attention to unity and compression.

CHAPTER IX.

View of Country Life during the Age of Shakspeare, continued—An Account of some of its Superstitions.

THE popular creed, during the age of Shakspeare, was perhaps more extended and systematised than in any preceding or subsequent period of our history. For this effect we are indebted, in a great measure, to the credulity and superstition of James the First, the publication of whose Demonology rendered a profession in the belief of sorcery and witchcraft a matter of fashion and even of interest; for a ready way to the favour of this monarch was an implicit assumption of his opinions, theological and metaphysical, as well as political.

* Jamieson’s Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, 1808.

It must not be inferred, however, that at the commencement of the seventeenth century, the human mind was unwilling or unprepared to shake off the load which had oppressed it for ages. Among the enlightened classes of society, now rapidly extending throughout the kingdom, the reception of these doctrines was rather the effect of court example than of settled conviction; but as the vernacular bards, and especially the dramatic, who ever hold unbounded influence over the multitude, thought proper, and certainly, in a poetical light, with great effect, to adopt the dogmata and machinery of James, the reign of superstition was, for a time, not only upheld, but extended among the inferior orders of the people.

“Every goblin of ignorance,” observes Warton, speaking of this period, “did not vanish at the first glimmerings of the morning of science. Reason suffered a few demons still to linger, which she chose to retain in her service under the guidance of poetry. Men believed, or were willing to believe, that spirits were yet hovering around, who brought with them “airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,” that the ghost was duly released from his prison of torment at the sound of the curfew, and that fairies imprinted mysterious circles on the turf by moon-light. Much of this credulity was even consecrated by the name of science and profound speculation. Prospero had not yet “broken and buried his staff,” nor “drowned his book deeper than did ever plummet sound.” It was now that the alchymist, and the judicial astrologer, conducted his occult operations by the potent intercourse of some preternatural being, who came obsequious to his call, and was bound to accomplish his severest services, under certain conditions, and for a limited duration of time. It was actually one of the pretended feats of these fantastic philosophers, to evoke the queen of the Fairies in the solitude of a gloomy grove, who, preceded by a sudden rustling of the leaves, appeared in robes of transcendent lustre. The Shakspeare of a more instructed and polished age would not have given us a magician darkening the sun at noon, the sabbath of the witches, and the cauldron of incantation.”*

The history of the popular mythology, therefore, of this era, at a time when it was cherished by the throne, and adopted, in its fullest extent, by the greatest poetical genius which ever existed, must necessarily occupy a large share of our attention. So extensive, indeed, is the subject, and so full of interest and curiosity, that to exhaust it in this division of the work, would be to encroach upon that symmetry of plan, that relative proportion which we wish to preserve. The four great subjects, therefore, of Fairies, Witchcraft, Magic, and Apparitions, will be deferred to the Second Part, and annexed as Dissertations to our remarks on the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, the *Tempest*, and *Hamlet*.

As a consequent of this decision, the present chapter, after noticing, in a *general* way, the various credulities of the country, will dwell, at some length, on those periods of the year which have been peculiarly devoted to superstitious rites and observances, and include the residue of the subject under the heads of Omens, Charms, Sympathies, Cures, and Miscellaneous Superstitions.

It is from the “*Winter-Night's Conversation*” of the lower orders of the people that we may derive, in any age, the most authentic catalogue of its superstitions. This fearful pleasure of children and uneducated persons, and the eager curiosity which attends it, have been faithfully painted by Shakspeare:—

“ <i>Hermione.</i>	Pray you sit by us,
And tell's a tale.	
<i>Mamillius.</i>	Merry, or sad, shall't be?
<i>Her.</i>	As merry as you will.
<i>Mam.</i>	A sad tale's best for winter:
I have one of sprites and goblins.	
<i>Her.</i>	Let's have that, sir.
Come on, sit down:—Come on, and do your best	
To fright me with your sprites: you're powerful at it.	
<i>Mam.</i>	There was a man,—
<i>Her.</i>	Nay, come, sit down; then on.
<i>Mam.</i>	Dwelt by a church-yard;—I will tell it softly;
Yon crickets shall not hear it.	

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 496.

Her. Come on
And give't in mine ear." *

For the particulars forming the subject-matter of these tales, and for their effect on the hearers, we must have recourse to writers contemporary with the bard, whose object it was to censure or detail these legendary wonders. Thus Lavaterus, who wrote a book "*De Spectris*," in 1570, which was translated into English in 1572, remarks that "if when men sit at the table, mention be made of spirits and elves, many times wemen and children are so afrayde that they dare scarce go out of dores alone, least they shoulte meete wyth some evyl thing: and if they chaunce to heare any kinde of noise, by and by they thinke there are some spirits behynde them:" and again in a subsequent page, "simple foolish men — imagine that there be certayne elves or fairies of the earth, and tell many straunge and marvellous tales of them, which they have heard of their grand-mothers and mothers, howe they have appeared unto those of the house, have done service, have rocked the cradell, and (which is a signe of good luck) do continually tary in the house." † He has the good sense, however, to reprobate the then general custom, a practice which has more or less prevailed even to our own times, of frightening children by stories and assumed appearances of this kind. "It is a common custome," he observes, "in many places, that at a certaine time of the yeare, one with a nette or visarde on his face maketh Children afrayde, to the ende that ever after they should laboure and be obediente to their Parentes: afterward they tel them that those which they saw, were Bugs, Witches, and Haggas, which thing they verily believe, and are commonly miserablie afrayde. How be it, it is not expedient so to terrifie Children. For sometimes through great feare they fall into dangerous diseases, and in the nyght crye out, when they are fast asleep. Salomon teacheth us to chasten children with the rod, and so to make them stand in awe: he doth not say, we must beare them in hande they shall be devoured of Bugges, Hags of the night, and such like monsters." ‡ But it is to Reginald Scot that we are indebted for the most curious and extensive enumeration of these fables which haunted our progenitors from the cradle to the grave.

"In our childhood," says he, "our mother's maids have so terrified us with an *ouglie divell* having hornes on his head, fier in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eies like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a beare, a skin like a Niger, and a voice roaring like a lion, whereby we start and are afraid when we heare one crie Bough: and they have so fraid us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, syrens, kit with the can'sticke, tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, giants, imps, calcars, conjurors, nymphes, changlings, Incubus, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell-waine, the fierdrake, the puckle Tom thombe, hob goblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our own shadowes: in so much as some never feare the divell, but in a darke night; and then a polled sheepe is a perillous beast, and manie times is taken for our father's soule, speciallie in a churchyard, where a right hardie man heretofore scant durst passe by night, but his haire would stand upright." §

That this mode of passing away the time, "the long solitary winter nights," was as much in vogue in 1617 as in 1570 and 1580, is apparent from Burton, who reckons among the ordinary recreations of winter, tales of giants, dwarfs, witches, fayries, goblins, and friers. **

The predilection which existed, during this period of our annals, for the marvellous, the terrible, and romantic, especially among the peasantry, has been noticed by several of our best writers. Addison, in reference to the genius of Shak-

* Winter's Tale, act ii. sc. 1.

† "Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters, and alterations of kyngdomes. One Booke, Written by Lewes Lavaterus of Tigurine. And translated into Englyshe by R. H." Printed at London by Henry Benneyman, for Richard Watkyns, 1572. Vide p. 14 and 49.

‡ Lavaterus, p. 21.

** Vide Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 172.

§ Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1580, p. 152, 153.

speare for the wild and wonderful in poetry, remarks, that "our forefathers loved to astonish themselves with the apprehensions of witchcraft, prodigies, charms, and enchantments. There was not a village in England that had not a ghost in it; the churchyards were all haunted; every large common had a circle of fairies belonging to it, and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with who had not seen a spirit;" * and Mr. Grose, after enumerating several popular superstitions, extends the subject in a very entertaining manner.

"In former times," says he, "these notions were so prevalent, that it was deemed little less than atheism to doubt them; and in many instances the terrors caused by them embittered the lives of a great number of persons of all ages; by degrees almost shutting them out of their own houses, and deterring them from going from one village to another after sun-set. The room in which the head of a family had died, was for a long time untenanted; particularly if they died without a will, or were supposed to have entertained any particular religious opinions. But if any disconsolate old maiden, or love-crossed bachelor, happened to dispatch themselves in their garters, the room where the deed was perpetrated was rendered for ever after uninhabitable, and not unfrequently was nailed up. If a drunken farmer, returning from market, fell from Old Dobbin and broke his neck,—or a carter, under the same predicament, tumbled from his cart or waggon, and was killed by it,—that spot was ever after haunted and impassable: in short, there was scarcely a bye-lane or cross-way but had its ghost, who appeared in the shape of a headless cow or horse; or clothed all in white, glared with its saucer eyes over a gate or stile. Ghosts of superior rank, when they appeared abroad, rode in coaches drawn by six headless horses, and driven by a headless coachman and postilions. Almost every ancient manor-house was haunted by some one at least of its former masters or mistresses, where, besides divers other noises, that of telling money was distinctly heard; and as for the churchyards, the number of ghosts that walked there, according to the village computation, almost equalled the living parishioners: to pass them at night, was an achievement not to be attempted by any one in the parish, the sextons excepted; who perhaps being particularly privileged, to make use of the common expression, never saw any thing worse than themselves." †

Of these superstitions, as forming the subject of "a country conversation in a winter's evening," a very interesting detail has been given by Mr. Bourne; the picture was drawn about a hundred years ago; but, though even then partially applicable, may be considered as a faithful general representation of the two preceding centuries.

"Nothing is commoner in Country Places," says this historian of credulity, "than for a whole family in a Winter's Evening, to sit round the fire, and tell stories of apparitions and ghosts. Some of them have seen spirits in the shapes of cows, and dogs, and horses; and some have seen even the devil himself, with a cloven foot.

"Another part of this conversation generally turns upon *Fairies*. These, they tell you, have frequently been heard and seen; nay, that there are some still living who were stolen away by them, and confined seven years. According to the description they give of them, who pretend to have seen them, they are in the shape of men, exceeding little: They are always clad in green, and frequent the woods and fields; when they make cakes (which is a work they have been often heard at) they are very noisy; and when they have done, they are full of mirth and pastime. But generally they dance in moonlight when mortals are asleep, and not capable of seeing them, as may be observed on the following morn; their dancing places being very distinguishable. For as they dance hand in hand, and so make a *circle* in their dance, so next day there will be seen *rings* and *circles* on the grass.

"Another tradition they hold, and which is often talked of, is, that there are particular places allotted to spirits to walk in. Thence it was that formerly, such frequent reports were abroad of this and that particular place being haunted by a spirit, and that the common people say now and then, such a place is dangerous to be passed through at night, because a spirit walks there. Nay, they'll further tell you, that some spirits have lamented the hardness of their condition in being obliged to walk in cold and uncomfortable places, and have therefore desired the person who was so hardy as to speak to them, to gift them with a warmer walk, by some well grown *hedge*, or in some *shady vale*, where they might be shelter'd from the rain and wind.

"The last topic of this conversation I shall take notice of, shall be the tales of *haunted houses*.

* Spectator, No. 419., vol. vi. p. 118. of Sharpe's edition. See also Nos. 12, 110, and 117.

† Grose's Provincial Glossary, p. 242, 243.

And indeed it is not to be wondered at, that this is never omitted. For formerly almost every place had a house of this kind. If a house was seated on some melancholy place, or built in some old romantic manner; or if any particular accident had happened in it, such as murder, sudden death, or the like, to be sure that house had a mark set on it, and was afterwards esteemed the habitation of a ghost. In talking upon this point, they generally show the occasion of the house's being *haunted*, the merry pranks of the spirit, and how it was laid. Stories of this kind are infinite, and there are few villages which have not either had such an house in it, or near it." *

The quotations which we have now given from writers contemporary with, and subsequent to, Shakspeare, will point out, in a general way, the prevalent superstitions of the country at this period, and the topics which were usually discussed round the fire-side of the cottage or manorial hall, when the blast blew keen on a December's night, and the faggot's blaze was seen, by fits, illumining the rafter'd roof.

The progress of science, of literature, and rational theology, has, in a very great degree, dissipated these illusions; but there still lingers, in hamlets remote from general intercourse, a somewhat similar spirit of credulity, where the legend of unearthly agency is yet listened to with eager curiosity and fond belief. These vestiges of superstitions which were once universally prevalent, have been seized upon with avidity by many modern poets, and form some of the most striking passages in their works. More particularly the ghostly and traditionary lore of the cotter's winter-night, has been a favourite subject with them. Thus Thomson tells us, that

————— " the village rouses up the fire,
While well attested, and as well believed,
Heard solemn, goes the goblin-story round;
Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all : " †

and Akenside, still more poetically, that

————— " by night
The village-matron round the blazing hearth
Suspends the infant-audience with her tales,
Breathing astonishment! of witching rhymes,
And evil spirits; of the death-bed call
Of him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd
The orphan's portion; of unquiet souls
Risen from the grave to ease the heavy guilt
Of deeds in life conceal'd; of shapes that walk
At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave
The torch of hell around the murderer's bed.
At every solemn pause the crowd recoil,
Gazing each other speechless, and congeal'd
With shivering sighs: till eager for th' event,
Around the beldame all erect they hang,
Each trembling heart with grateful terrors quell'd." ‡

The lamented Kirke White has also happily introduced a similar picture; having described the day-revels of a Whitsuntide wake, he adds,

————— " then at eve.
Commence the harmless rites and auguries;
And many a tale of ancient days goes round.
They tell of wizard seer, whose potent spells
Could hold in dreadful thrall the labouring moon,
Or draw the fix'd stars from their eminence,
And still the midnight tempest.—Then anon,
Tell of uncharnel'd spectres, seen to glide
Along the lone wood's unfrequented path,
Startling the nighted traveller; while the sound
Of undistinguished murmurs, heard to come

* Bourne's Antiquities of the Common People apud Brand, p. 113, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123.

† Seasons, Winter, line 617.

‡ Pleasures of Imagination, book i.

From the dark centre of the deep'ning glen,
Struck on his frozen ear : *

and lastly Mr. Scott, in his highly interesting poem entitled *Rokeby*, speaking of the tales of superstition, adds,

" When Christmas logs blaze high and wide,
Such wonders speed the festal tide,
While Curiosity and Fear,
Pleasure and pain, sit crouching near,
Till childhood's cheek no longer glows,
And village-maidens lose the rose.
The thrilling interest rises higher,
The circle closes nigh and nigher,
And shuddering glance is cast behind,
As louder moans the wintry wind."

Cant. ii. st. 10.

After this brief outline of the common superstitions of the country, as they existed in the days of Shakspeare, and as they still linger among us, we shall proceed, in conformity with our plan, to notice those Days which have been peculiarly devoted to superstitious rites and observances.

In entering upon this subject, however, it will be necessary to remark, that as several of these days are still kept by the vulgar in the same manner, and with the same spirit of credulity which subsisted in the reign of Elizabeth, it would be superfluous to enter at large into a detail of their ceremonies, and that to mark the coincidence of usage, occurring at these periods, will be nearly all that can be deemed requisite. Thus on St. Paul's Day, on Candlemas Day, and on St. Swithin's Day, the prognosticators of weather still find as much employment, and as much credit as ever.† St. Mark's Day is still beheld with dread, as fixing the destinies of life and death, and Childermas still keeps in countenance the doctrine of lucky and unlucky days.

A similarity nearly equal may be observed with regard to the rites of lovers on St. Valentine's Day. The tradition, that birds choosing their mates on this day, occasioned the custom of drawing Valentines, has been the opinion of our poets from Chaucer to the present hour. Shakspeare alludes to it in the following passage :

" Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past;
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?"‡

* The Remains of Henry Kirke White, vol. i. p. 311.

† Gay, in his *Trivia*, notices, at some length, the prognostications attendant on these days, and which equally apply to ancient and to modern times :—

" All superstition from thy breast repel;
Let cred'lous boys and prattling nurses tell
How if the *Festival of Paul* be clear,
Plenty from lib'ral horn shall strow the year :
When the dark skies dissolve in *snow* and *rain*,
The lab'ring *hind* shall *yoke* the *steer* in *vain* ;
But if the threat'ning *winds* in tempest roar,
Then *war* shall bathe her wasteful sword in gore.
How if, on *Swithen's* feast the welkin lours,
And ev'ry penthouse streams with hasty show'rs,
Twice twenty days shall clouds their fleeces drain,
And wash the pavements with *incessant rain* :
Let no such vulgar tales debase thy mind,
Nor *Paul*, nor *Swithin*, rule the *clouds* and *wind*."

‡ *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iv. sc. 1. Buchanan also beautifully records the same traditionary imagery :

" Festa Valentino rediit lux —
Quisque sibi sociam jam legit ales avem.
Inde sibi dominam per sortes quærere in annum
Mansit ab antiquis mos repetitus avis ;
Quisque legit dominam, quam casto observet amore,
Quam nitidis sertis obsequioque colat :
Mittere cui possit blandi munuscula Veris."

The ceremony of this day, however, has been attributed to various sources beside the rural tradition just mentioned. The legend itself of St. Valentine, a presbyter of the church, who was beheaded under the Emperor Claudius, we are assured by Mr. Brand, contains nothing which could give rise to the custom; but it has been supposed by some to have originated from an observance peculiar to carnival time, which occurred about this very period. It was usual, on this occasion, for vast numbers of knights to visit the different courts of Europe, where they entertained the ladies with pageantry and tournaments. Each lady, at these magnificent feasts, selected a knight, who engaged to serve her for a whole year, and to perform whatever she chose to command. One of the never-failing consequences of this engagement, was an injunction to employ his muse in the celebration of his mistress.

Menage, in his Etymological Dictionary, has accounted for the term Valentine, by stating that Madame Royale, daughter of Henry the Fourth of France, having built a palace near Turin, which, in honour of the Saint, then in high esteem, she called *the Valentine*, at the first entertainment which she gave in it, was pleased to order that the ladies should receive their lovers for the year by lots, reserving to herself the privilege of being independent of chance, and of choosing her own partner. At the various balls which this gallant princess gave, during the year, it was directed that each lady should receive a nosegay from her lover, and that, at every tournament, the knight's trappings for his horse should be furnished by his allotted mistress, with this proviso, that the prize obtained should be hers. This custom, says Menage, occasioned the parties to be called Valentines.

Mr. Brand, in his observations on Bourne's Antiquities, thinks, that the usages of this day are the remains of an ancient superstition in the Church of Rome, of choosing patrons for the year ensuing, at this season; "and that, because ghosts were thought to walk on the night of this day, or about this time;" * but Mr. Douce, with more probability, considers them as a relic of paganism.

"It was the practice in ancient Rome," he observes, "during a great part of the month of February, to celebrate the *Lupercalia*, which were feasts in honour of Pan and Juno, whence the latter deity was named *februata*, *februalis*, and *februlla*. On this occasion, amidst a variety of ceremonies, the names of young women were put into a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. The pastors of the early Christian church, who by every possible means endeavoured to eradicate the vestiges of Pagan superstitions, and chiefly by some commutation of their forms, substituted, in the present instance, the names of particular saints instead of those of the women: and as the festival of the *Lupercalia* had commenced about the middle of February, they appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's day for celebrating the new feast, because it occurred nearly at the same time. This is, in part, the opinion of a learned and rational compiler of the lives of the saints, the Reverend Alban Butler. It should seem, however, that it was utterly impossible to extirpate altogether any ceremony to which the common people had been much accustomed; a fact which it were easy to prove in tracing the origin of various other popular superstitions: and accordingly the outline of the ancient ceremonies was preserved, but modified by some adaptation to the Christian system. It is reasonable to suppose that the above practice of choosing mates would gradually become reciprocal in the sexes; and that all persons so chosen would be called Valentines, from the day on which the ceremony took place." †

The modes of ascertaining the Valentine for the ensuing year, were nearly the same in Shakspeare's age as at the present period; they consisted either in drawing lots on Valentine-eve, or in considering the first person whom you met early on the following morning, as the destined object. In the former case the names of a certain number of one sex were, by an equal number of the other, put into a vase; and then every one drew a name, which for the time was termed their Valentine, and was considered as predictive of their future fortune in the nuptial state; in the second there was usually some little contrivance adopted, in order that the favoured object, when such existed, might be the first

* Bourne's Antiquities apud Brand, p. 253.

† Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 252, 253.

seen. To this custom Shakspeare refers, when he represents Ophelia, in her distraction, singing,

“ Good morrow, ’tis Saint Valentine’s day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.” *

The practice of addressing verses, and sending presents, to the person chosen, has been continued from the days of James I., in which the gifts of Valentines have been noticed by Moresin,† to modern times; and we may add a trait, not now observed, perhaps, on the authority of an old English ballad, in which the lasses are directed to pray *cross-legged* to Saint Valentine, for good luck.‡

It was a usage of the sixteenth century, in its object laudable and useful, for the inhabitants of towns and villages, during the summer-season, to meet after sunset, in the streets, and for the wealthier sort to recreate themselves and their poorer friends with banquets and bonfires. Of this custom Stowe has left us a pleasing account:—

“ In the moneths of June and July,” he relates, “ on the Vigiles of festivall dayes, and on the same festivall dayes in the evenings, after the sun-setting, there were usually made bonfires in the streets, every man bestowing wood or labour towards them. The wealthier sort also before their dores, neere to the said bonfires, would set out tables on the vigiles, furnished with sweet bread, and good drink, and on the festivall dayes with meates and drinks plentifully, whereunto they would invite their neighbours and passengers also to sit, and be merry with them in great familiarity, praying God for his benefits bestowed on them. These were called bonfires, as well of amity amongst neighbours, that beeing before at controversie, were there by the labour of others reconciled, and made of bitter enemies loving friends; as also for the virtue that a great fire hath, to purge the infection of the ayre.” § These rites were, however, more particularly practised on Midsummer-Eve, the Vigil of Saint John the Baptist, a period of the year to which our ancestors paid singular attention, and combined with it several superstitious observances. “ On the Vigill of Saint John the Baptist,” continues Stowe, “ every man’s dore beeing shadowed with greene Birch, long Fennell, Saint John’s Wort, Orpin, white Lillies, and such like, garnished upon with Garlands of beautifull flowers, had also Lamps of glasse, with Oyle burning in them all the night, some hung out branches of yron curiously wrought, containing hundreds of Lamps lighted at once, which made a goodly shew.” **

Of some of the superstitions connected with this Eve, Barnabe Googe has left us an account in his translation of Neogeorgius, which was published, and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, in 1570:—

“ Then doth the joyfull feast of John the Baptist take his turne,
When bonfires great, with lofty flame in every towne doe burne,
And young men round about with maydes doe daunce in every street,
With garlands wrought of mother-wort, or else of vervaine sweet,
And many other flowers faire, with violets in their hands;
Where as they all doe fondly thinke that whosoever stands,

* Mr. Gay has more distinctly recorded this ceremony in the following lines:—

“ Last Valentine, the day when birds of kind
Their paramours with mutual chirpings find;
I early rose, just at the break of day,
Before the sun had chas’d the stars away;
Afield I went, amid the morning dew,
To milk my kine (for so should housewives do),
Thee first I spied, and the first swain we see
In spite of fortune *shall our true Love be.*”

† “ Et vere ad Valentini festum à viris habent foeminae munera, et alio temporis viris dantur.” Moresini Deprav. Relig. 160.

‡ Douce’s Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 258.—“ I have found unquestionable authority,” remarks Mr. Brand, “ to evince that the custom of chusing Valentines was a sport practised in the houses of the gentry in England as early as the year 1476.” Brand apud Ellis, vol. i. p. 48.

The authority alluded to by Mr. Brand, is a letter, in Fenn’s Paston Letters, vol. ii. p. 211., dated February, 1476.

§ Survey of London, 1618, p. 159

** Ibid.

And thorow the flowers behold the flame, his eyes shall feele no paine.
 When thus till night they daunced have, they through the fire amaine
 With striving mindes doe run, and all their herbs they cast therein;
 And then, with words devout and prayers, they solemnly begin,
 Desiring God that all their illes may there confounded be;
 Whereby they thinke, through all that yeare, from agues to be free." *

This Midsummer-Eve Fire and the rites attending it, appear to be reliques of pagan worship, for Gebelin in his "Allégories Orientales" observes, that at the moment of the Summer Solstice the ancients, from the most remote antiquity, were accustomed to light fires, in honour of the New Year, which they believed to have originally commenced in fire. These fires or *feux de joie* were accompanied with vows and sacrifices for plenty and prosperity, and with dances and leaping over the flames, "each on his departure snatching a firebrand of greater or less magnitude, whilst the rest was scattered to the wind, in order that it might disperse every evil as it dispersed the ashes." †

Many other superstitions, however, than those mentioned by Googe, were practised on this mysterious eve. To one of the most important Shakspeare alludes in the First Part of King Henry the Fourth, where Gadshill says of himself and company, "We have the receipt of fern-seed, we walk invisible." Jonson and Fletcher have also ascribed the same wonderful property to this plant, the first in his "New Inn."

—————" I had
 No medicine, Sir, to go invisible,
 No *fern-seed* in my pocket;" ‡

the second in the "Fair Maid of the Inn,"—

—————" had you Gyges' ring,
 Or the *herb* that gives invisibility?" §

It was the belief of our credulous ancestors, that the fern-seed became visible only on St. John's Eve, and at the precise moment of the birth of the Saint; that it was under the peculiar protection of the Queen of Faery, and that on this awful night, the most tremendous conflicts took place, for its possession, between sorcerers and spirits; for

"The wond'rous one-night seeding ferne,"

as Browne calls it,** was conceived not only to confer invisibility at pleasure, on those who succeeded in procuring it, but it was also esteemed of sovereign potency in the fabrication of charms and incantations. Those, therefore, who were addicted to the arts of magic, and possessed sufficient courage for the enterprise, were believed to watch in solitude during this solemn period, in order that they might seize the seed on the instant of its appearance.

The achievement, however, was accompanied with great danger; for if the adventurer were not protected by spells of mighty power, he was exposed to the assaults of demons and spirits, who envied him the possession of the plant, and who generally took care that he should lose either his life or his labour in the attempt. "A person who went to gather it, reported that the spirits whisked by his ears, and sometimes struck his hat, and other parts of his body; and at

* Vide Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, p. 317.

† "L'origine de ce feu que tant de nations conservent encore, et qui se perd dans l'antiquité, est très simple. C'était un feu de joie, allumé au moment où l'année commençait; car la première de toutes les Années, la plus ancienne dont on ait quelque connaissance, s'ouvrait au mois de Juin.—

"Ces feux de joie étaient accompagnés en même temps de vœux et de sacrifices pour la prospérité des peuples et des biens de la terre: on dansait aussi autour de ce feu; car y a-t-il quelque fête sans danse? et les plus agiles sautaient par dessus. En se retirant, chacun emportait un tison plus ou moins grand, et le reste était jeté au vent, afin qu'il emportât tout malheur, comme il emportait ces cendres." Hist. d'Hercule, p. 203.

‡ Jonson's Works, act i. sc. 6.

§ Beaumont and Fletcher's Works apud Colman.

** Chalmers's English Poets, vol. vi. p. 281. Britannia's Pastorals, book ii. song 2.

length, when he thought he had got a good quantity of it, and secured it in papers and a box, when he came home, he found both empty."*

Another superstition, of a nature highly impressive and terrible, consists in the idea that any person fasting on Midsummer-Eve, and sitting in the church-porch, will at midnight see the spirits of those who are to die in the parish during that year, approach and knock at the church door, precisely in the order of time in which they are doomed to depart. It is related, by the author of *Pandemonium*, that one of the company of watchers, on this night, having fallen into a profound sleep, his ghost or spirit, whilst he lay in this state, was seen by the rest of his companions, knocking at the church-door.†

Of these wild traditions of the "olden time" Collins has made a most striking use in his *Ode to Fear*:—

"Ne'er be I found, by thee o'eraw'd,
In that thrice-hallow'd eve, abroad,
When ghosts, as cottage-maids believe,
Their pebbled beds permitted leave;
And goblins haunt, from fire, or fen,
Or mine, or flood, the walks of men!"

The observance of Midsummer-Eve by rejoicings, spells, and charms, has continued until within these fifty years, especially in Cornwall, in the North of England, and in Scotland. Bourne, in 1725, tells us, that "on the Eve of St. John Baptist, commonly called Midsummer-Eve, it is usual in the most of country places, and also here and there in towns and cities, for both old and young to meet together, and be merry over a large fire, which is made in the open street. Over this they frequently leap and play at various games, such as running, wrestling, dancing, etc. But this is generally the exercise of the younger sort; for the old ones, for the most part, sit by as spectators, and enjoy themselves and their bottle. And thus they spend their time till midnight, and sometimes till cock-crow;"‡ and Borlase, in his *History of Cornwall*, about thirty years later, states, that "the Cornish make bonfires in every village on the Eve of St. John Baptist's and St. Peter's Days."§

It was a common superstition in the days of Shakspeare, and for two centuries preceding him, that the future husband or wife might be discovered on this Eve or on St. Agnes' night, by due fasting and by certain ceremonies; thus, if a maiden, fasting on Midsummer-Eve, laid a clean cloth at midnight, with bread, cheese, and ale, and sate down, with the street-door open, the person whom she is fated to marry will enter the room, fill the glass, drink to her, bow, and retire.** A similar effect, as to the visionary appearance of the destined bridegroom, was supposed to follow the sowing of hempseed on this night, either in the field or church-yard. Mr. Strutt, depicting the manners of the fifteenth century, has given this latter superstition, from the mouth of an imaginary witch, in the following rhymes:—

"Around the church see that you go,
With kirtle white and girdle blue,
At midnight thrice, and hempseed sow;
Calling upon your lover true,
Thus shalt thou say;
These seeds I sow: swift let them grow,
Till he, who must my husband be,
Shall follow me and mow:"††

* Grose's *Provincial Glossary*, p. 299.

† *Ibid.* p. 285.

‡ Bourne's *Antiquities*, p. 301.

§ Stowe also mentions, that bonfires and rejoicings were observed on the Eve of St. Peter and Paul the Apostles; he gives likewise a curious account of the *Marching Watches* which had been regularly kept on Midsummer-Eve, time out of mind, by the citizens of London and other large towns; but these had ceased before the age of Shakspeare, the last having been appointed by Sir John Gresham, in 1548, though an attempt was made to procure their revival, by John Montgomery in 1585, who published a book on the subject, dedicated to Sir Thos. Pullison, then Lord Mayor; this offer however did not succeed.

** Grose's *Provincial Glossary*, p. 285.

†† *Queenhoo-Hall*, vol. i. p. 136.

a charm which appears to have been in vogue even in the time of Gay, who, in his *Shepherd's Week*, makes Hobnelia say,—

“ At eve last midsummer no sleep I sought,
But to the field a bag of hempseed brought;
I scatter'd round the seed on every side,
And three times in a trembling accent cried,
“ This hempseed with my virgin hand I sow,
Who shall my true-love be, the crop shall mow.”
I straight look'd back, and if my eyes speak truth,
With his keen scythe behind me came the youth.”—*The Spell*, line 27.

Another mode, which prevailed in the 16th and 17th centuries, of procuring similar information on this festival, through the medium of dreams, consisted in digging for what was called the plaintain coal; the search was to commence exactly at noon, and the material, when found, to be placed on the pillow at night. Of a wild-goose expedition of this kind Aubrey reports himself to have been a spectator. “ The last summer,” says he, “ on the day of St. John Baptist, 1694, I accidentally was walking in the pasture behind Montague-house: it was twelve o'clock. I saw there about two or three-and-twenty young women, most of them well habited, on their knees, very busy, as if they had been weeding. I could not presently learn what the matter was; at last, a young man told me that they were looking for a coal under the root of a plaintain to put under their heads that night, and they should dream who would be their husbands: it was to be found that day and hour.” He adds, “ the women have several magical secrets handed down to them by tradition for this purpose, as, on St. Agnes' night, 21st January, take a row of pins, and pull out every one, one after another, saying a paternoster, or ‘ our father,’ sticking a pin in your sleeve, and you will dream of him or her you shall marry;” * spells to which Ben Jonson alludes, when he says,—

—— “ On sweet St. Agnes' night
Please you with the promis'd sight;
Some of husbands, some of lovers,
Which an empty dream discovers.” †

That it was the custom, in Elizabeth's and James's days, to tell tales or perform plays and masques on Christmas-Eve, on Twelfth Night, and on Midsummer-Eve, may be drawn from the dramas of Shakspeare, and the masques of Jonson. The *Midsummer-Night's Dream* of the former, appears to have been so called, because its exhibition was to take place on that night, for the time of action of the piece itself is the vigil of May-Day, as is that of the *Winter's Tale* the period of sheep-shearing. It is probable also, as Mr. Steevens has observed, that Shakspeare might have been influenced in his choice of the fanciful machinery of this play, by the recollection of the proverb attached to the season, and which he has himself introduced in the *Twelfth-Night*, where Olivia remarks of Malvolio's apparent distraction, that it “ is a very Midsummer madness;” an adage founded on the common opinion, that the brain, being heated by the intensity of the sun's rays, was more susceptible of those flights of imagination which border on insanity, than at any other period of the year.

The next season distinguished by any very remarkable tincture of the popular creed, is Michaelmas, or the Feast of St. Michael and all angels. Whenever this day comes, says Bourne, “ it brings into the minds of the people, that old opinion of Tutelar Angels, that every man has his Guardian Angel; that is one particular angel who attends him from his coming in, till his going out of life, who guides him through the troubles of the world, and strives as much as he can, to bring him to heaven.” ‡

* Aubrey's *Miscellanies*, p. 103.

‡ Bourne's *Antiquities*, p. 320, 321.

† Jonson's *Works*, fol. edit. vol. i.

That the doctrine of the ministry of angels, and their occasional interference with the affairs of man, is an old opinion, cannot be denied. It pervades the whole of the Old and New Testaments, and appears to have been an article of the patriarchal creed; for from the Book of Job, perhaps the oldest which exists, may be drawn not only the doctrine of the ministration of angels, but that of their division into certain distinct orders, such as angels, intercessors, destroyers, etc.* With this general information we ought to have been content: but superstition has been busy in promulgating hierarchies, the offspring of its own heated imagination; in minutely ascertaining the numbers and offices of angels in heaven and on earth; and in naming and appropriating certain of them as the guardians and protectors of kingdoms, cities, families, and individuals. The mythologies of Persia, Arabia, and Greece abound with these arbitrary arrangements; Hesiod declares that the angels appointed to watch over the earth, amount exactly to thirty-thousand; † and Plato divides the world of spirits good and bad into nine classes, in which he has been followed by some of the philosophising Christians. The angelic hierarchy of Dionysius, however, is the one usually adopted; he professes to interfere only with good spirits, and divides his angels, perhaps in imitation of Plato, into nine orders; the first he terms seraphim, the second cherubim, the third thrones, the fourth dominations, the fifth virtues, the sixth powers, the seventh principalities, the eighth archangels, and the ninth angels. ‡ Not content with this, he goes still farther, and has assigned to every country, and almost to every person of eminence, a peculiar angel; thus to Adam he gives Razael; to Abraham, Zakiel; to Isaiah, Raphael; to Jacob, Piel; to Moses, Metraton, etc., speaking, as Calvin observes, not as if by report, but as though he had slipped down from heaven, and told of the things which he had seen there. §

Of this systematic hierarchy the greater portion formed, during the age of Shakspeare, and for nearly a century afterwards, an important part of the popular creed, as may be ascertained from an inspection of Scot on Witchcraft in 1584, Heywood's "Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells, their Names, Orders, and Offices," in 1635, and from Burton's *Anatomie of Melancholy*, which, though first published in 1617, continued to re-appear in frequent editions until the close of the seventeenth century.

The doctrine of Guardian Angels, as appropriated to individuals, more especially appears to have been entertained by Shakspeare and his contemporaries; an idea pleasing to the human mind, though, in the opinion of the most acute theologians, not warranted by Scripture; where only the general ministry of angels is recorded; and, accordingly, the collect of the day, in our admirable Liturgy, merely refers to, and prays for, such general interference in our behalf.

The assignment of a good angel, or of a good and bad angel to every individual, as soon as created, is supported by the English Lavaterus in 1572, and recorded as the general object of belief, by the rational Scot, in his interesting discourse on spirits.

"Saint Herome in his Commentaries," says Lavaterus, "and other fathers do conclude, that God doth assigne unto every soule as soone as he createth him his peculiar Angell, which taketh care of him. But whether that every one of the elect have hys proper angell, or many angells be appoynted unto him, it is not expresly sette foorth, yet this is most sure and certayne, that God hath given his angells in charge to have regard and care over us. Daniel witnesseth in his tenth

* Vide Job, chap xxxiii. v. 22, 23.

† Opera et Dies, vol. i. 246.

‡ Dionys. in Cælest. Hierarch. cap. ix. x.

§ Calv. Lib. Instit. I. c. xiv. It is worthy of remark, that Reginald Scot, from whose "Discoverie of Witchcraft," p. 500., this account of the hierarchy of Dionysius is taken, has brought forward a passage from his kinsman Edward Deering, which broaches the same doctrine as that held by Bishop Horsley in the last sermon which he ever wrote. "If you read Deering," says Scot, "upon the first chapter to the Hebrues, you shall see this matter (the angelic theory of Dionysius) notablie handled; where he saith, that whensoever archangell is mentioned in the Scriptures it signifieth our Saviour Christ, and no creature." p. 501.—Now in the sermon alluded to by Horsley, the text of which is Dan. iv. 17, he affirms, that the term "Michael," or "Michael the Archangel," wherever it occurs, is nothing more than a name for our Saviour. Vide *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 376.

chapter, that angells have also charge of kingdomes, by whom God keepeth and protecteth them, and hindreth the wicked counsels of the devill. It may be proved by many places of the Scripture, that all Christian men have not only one angell, but also many, whome God imployeth to their service. In the 34th Psalm it is sayde, the angell of the Lorde pitcheth his tentes rounde about them which feare the Lorde, and helpeth them: which ought not to be doubted but that it is also at this daye, albeit we see them not. We reade that they appearing in sundrye shapes, have admonished menne, have comforted them, defended them, delivered them from danger, and also punished the wicked. Touching this matter, there are plentiful examples, which are not needfull to be repeated in this place. Sometimes they have eyther appeared in sleep, or in manner of visions, and sometimes they have performed their office, by some internall operations: as when a man's mynde foresheweth him, that a thing shall so happen, and after it happeneth so in deede, which anything I suppose is doone by God, [through the ministerie of angells. Angells for the most part take upon them the shapes of men, wherein they appeare." *

"Monsieur Bodin, M. Mal, and manie other papists," observes Scot, who gives us his opinion on the nature of angels, "gather upon the seventh of Daniel, that there are just ten millions of angels in heaven. Manie saie that angels are not by nature, but by office. Finallie, it were infinite to shew the absurd and curious collections hereabout. I for my part thinke with Calvine, that angels are creatures of God; though Moses speaking nothing of their creation, who onelie applied himself to the capacitie of the common people, reciting nothing but things seene. And I saie further with him, that they are heavenlie spirits, whose ministration and service God useth: and in that respect are called angels. I saie yet againe with him, that it is verie certaine, that they have no shape at all; for they are spirits, who never have anie: and finalie, I saie with him, that the Scriptures, for the capacitie of our wit, dooth not in vaine paint out angels unto us with wings; because we should conceive, that they are readie swiftlie to succour us. And certeinlie all the sounder divines doo conceive and give out, that both the names and also the number of angels are set down in the Scripture by the Holie-ghost, in terms to make us understand the greatnesse and the manner of their messages; which (I saie) are either expounded by the number of angels, or signified by their names.

"Furthermore, the schoole doctors affirme, that foure of the superior orders of angels never take anie forme or shape of bodies, neither are sent of anie arrand at anie time. As for arch-angels, they are sent onlie about great and secret matters; and angels are common hacknies about everie trifle; and that these can take what shape or bodie they list: marie they never take the forme of women or children. Item, they saie that angels take most terrible shapes: for Gabriel appeared to Marie, whon he saluted hir "facie rutilante, veste coruscante, ingressu mirabili, aspectu terribili," &c.: that is, with a bright countenance, shining attire, wonderfull gesture, and a dreadful visage, &c. It hath been long, and continueth yet a constant opinion, not onlie among the papists; but among others also, that everie man hath assigned him, at the time of his nativitie, a good angell and a bad. For the which there is no reason in nature, nor authoritie in Scripture. For not one angel, but all the angels are said to rejoyce more of one convert, than of ninetie and nine just. Neither did one onlie angel conveye Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. And therefore I conclude with Calvine, that he which referreth to one angel, the care that God hath to everie one of us, dooth himself great wrong." †

That Shakspeare embraced the doctrine common in his age, which assigns to every individual, at his birth, a good and bad angel, an idea highly poetical in itself, and therefore acceptable to a fervid imagination, is evident from the following remarkable passages:

"There is a good angel about him—but the devil out-bids him too." ‡

"You follow the young prince up and down like his ill angel." §

"Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,
Where Cæsar's is not; but near him, thy angel
Becomes a Fear, as being o'erpowered——

————— I say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him;
But, he away, 'tis noble;" **

* Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by night. p. 160, 161.

† Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 505, 506.

§ Henry IV. Part II. act i. sc. 2.

‡ Henry IV. Part II. act ii. sc. 4.

** Antony and Cleopatra, act ii. sc. 3.

and in Macbeth the same imagery is repeated—

————— “near him,
My genius is rebuk’d; as, it is said,
Mark Antony’s was by Cæsar’s.”

These lines from Antony and Cleopatra and Macbeth, which are founded on a passage in North’s Plutarch, where the soothsayer says to Antony, “thy Demon, (that is to say, the good angel and spirit that keepeth thee) is affraied of his,” sufficiently prove that the Roman Catholic doctrine of a good and evil angel is immediately drawn from the belief of Pagan antiquity in the agency of good and evil genii, a dogma to which we know their greatest philosophers were addicted, as is apparent from the Demon of Socrates.

Of the general, and as it may be termed, the patriarchal, doctrine of the ministry of angels, no poet has made so admirable an use as Milton, who tells us, in his *Paradise Lost*, that

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep,
All these, with ceaseless praise, his works behold,
Both day and night. How often, from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard
Celestial voices, through the midnight air,
Sole or responsive to each other’s note,
Singing their great Creator? oft in bands,
While they keep watch; or, nightly walking round,
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds,
In full harmonic number join’d; their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven.”*

We must be permitted to observe, in this place, that Dr. Horsley has, with great propriety, drawn a marked distinction between the full-formed hierarchy of fanciful theologians, and the Scripture-account of angelic agency; while he reprobates the one, he supports the other:

“Those,” says he, “who broached this doctrine (of an hierarchy of angels governing this world) could tell us exactly how many orders there are, and how many angels in each order; that the different orders have their different departments in government assigned to them: some, constantly attending in the presence of God, form his cabinet council; others are his provincial governors; every kingdom in the world having its appointed guardian angel, to whose management it is intrusted: others again are supposed to have the charge and custody of individuals. This system is, in truth, nothing better than Pagan polytheism.” He then subsequently and most judiciously gives us the following summary of Biblical information on the subject: “that the holy angels,” he remarks, “are often employed by God in his government of this sublunary world, is indeed clearly to be proved by holy writ: that they have powers over the matter of the universe analogous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared: but it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ, from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a prescribed extent. That the evil angels possessed, before the fall, the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. That they have a power over the human sensory (which is part of the material universe), which they are occasionally permitted to exercise, by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptations, must also be admitted.”†

We shall conclude these observations on St. Michael’s Day by adding, that in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was the custom of landlords to invite their tenants on this day, and to dine them in their great halls on Geese; birds which were then only kept by the gentry, and therefore esteemed a great delicacy. We must consequently set aside the tradition which attributes the introduction of this bird on the festival of St. Michael to Queen Elizabeth; the tale

* Book iv. line 677.

† Sermons, vol. ii. p. 412, 415, 416.

avers, that, being on her road to Tilbury Fort, she dined on Michaelmas Day, 1588, at Sir Neville Umfreville's seat, near that place, and that the knight, recollecting her partiality for high-seasoned food, had taken care to procure for her a savoury goose, after eating heartily of which she called for a half-pint bumper of Burgundy, and had scarcely drank it off to the destruction of the Spanish Armada, when she received the news of that joyful event; delighted with the speedy accomplishment of her toast, she is said to have annually commemorated this day with a goose, and that, of course, the example was followed by the Court and through the kingdom at large. The custom, however, must be referred to a preceding age, in which it will be found that the nobility and gentry had usually this delicious bird at their tables, both on St. Michael's and St. Martin's Day.*

We now approach another remarkably superstitious period of the year, the observance of which took place on the 31st of October, being the Vigil of All Saints' Day, and has been therefore commonly termed All Hallow Eve. In the North of England, and in Scotland, this was formerly a night of rejoicing and of the most mysterious rites and ceremonies. As beyond the Tweed the harvest was seldom completely got in before the close of October, Halloween became a kind of Harvest-home-feast; thus, Mr. Shaw informs us, in his History of the Province of Moray, that "a solemnity was kept, on the Eve of the first of November, as a thanksgiving for the safe Ingathering of the produce of the fields. This I am told, but have not seen it, is observed in Buchan, and other counties, by having Hallow-Eve Fires kindled on some rising ground."† In England Hallow-eve has been generally called Nut-crack Night, from one of the numerous spells usually had recourse to at this season; and in Shakspeare it is alluded to under the customary appellation of Hallowmas, where Speed tells Valentine in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, that he knows him to be in love, because he has learnt "to speak puling, like a beggar at Hallowmas;" a simile which refers to a relique of the Roman Catholic Festival of All Souls' Day on the 2d of November, when prayers were offered up for the repose of the souls of the departed; it being the custom, in Shakspeare's time, and is still, we believe, observed in some parts of the North, for the poor on All-Saints-Day to go a souling, as they term it, and in a plaintive or puling voice to petition for soul-cakes.

"In various parts of England," remarks Brady, "the remembrance of monastic customs is still preserved by giving oaten cakes to the poor neighbours, conformably to what was once the general usage, particularly in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Herefordshire, etc., when, by way of expressing gratitude, the receivers of this liberality offered the following homely benediction:

"God have your *saul*,
Bones and all;"

bearing more the appearance, in these enlightened days, of rustic scoff, than of thankfulness."‡

What has rendered All-Hallow-Eve, however, a period of mysterious dread, is the tradition, that on this night the host of evil spirits, witches, wizards, etc. are executing their baneful errands, and that the fairy court holds a grand annual procession, during which those who have been carried off by the fairies may be recovered, provided the attempt be made within a year and a day from the abstraction of the person stolen. That this achievement, which was attended with great peril, could only be performed on Hallow-Eve, and that this night was esteemed the anniversary of the elfin tribe, may be established on the evidence of our Northern poets. Montgomery, in his "Flyting against Polwart," published about 1584, thus mentions the procession:

"In the hinder end of harvest, on All-hallow een,
When our *gude neighbours* dois ride, if I read right,
Some buckled on a buneward, and some on a been,
Ay trottand in troupes from the twilight;

* Vide Brady's Clavis Calendaria, vol. ii. p. 180.

† Brand's Appendix to Bourne's Antiquities, p. 382.

‡ Clavis Calendaria, vol. ii. p. 229.

Some saidled a she-ape, all grathed into green,
 Some hobland on a hemp stalk, hovard to the hight,
 The king of Pharie and his court, with the elf queen,
 With many elfish incubus was ridand that night;”*

and in the ballad called “Young Tamlane,” whose antiquity is ascertained from being noticed in the “Complaynt of Scotland,” the chief incident of the story is the recovery of Tamlane from the power of the fairies on this holy eve: —

“This night is Hallowe’en, Janet;
 The morn is Hallowday;
 And, gin ye dare your true love win,
 Ye have nae time to stay.

The night it is good Hallowein,
 When fairy folk will ride;
 And they, that wad their true love win,
 At Miles Cross they maun bide.”*

It is still recorded by tradition, relates Mr. Scott, that

“The wife of a farmer in Lothian having been carried off by the fairies, she, during the year of probation, repeatedly appeared on Sunday, in the midst of her children, combing their hair. On one of these occasions she was accosted by her husband; when she related to him the unfortunate event which had separated them, instructed him by what means he might win her, and exhorted him to exert all his courage, since her temporal and eternal happiness depended on the success of his attempt. The farmer, who ardently loved his wife, set out on Hallowe’en, and, in the midst of a plot of furze, waited impatiently for the procession of the fairies. At the ringing of the fairy bridles, and the wild unearthly sound which accompanied the cavalcade, his heart failed him, and he suffered the ghostly train to pass by without interruption. When the last had rode past, the whole troop vanished, with loud shouts of laughter and exultation; among which he plainly discovered the voice of his wife, lamenting that he had lost her for ever.”

Numerous have been the ceremonies, spells, and charms, which formerly distinguished All-Hallow-Eve. In England, except in a few remote places in the North, they have ceased to be observed for the last half century; but in the West of Scotland they are still retained with a kind of religious veneration, as is sufficiently proved by the inimitable poem of Burns, entitled Halloween, which, in a vein of exquisite poetry and genuine humour, minutely details the various superstitions which have been practised on this night from time immemorial. Of these, as including all which prevailed in England, and which were, in a great degree, common to both countries, in the time of Shakspeare, we shall give a few sketches, nearly in the words of Burns, as annexed in the notes to his poem, merely observing that one of the spells, that of sowing hemp-seed, is omitted, as having been already described among the rites of Midsummer-Eve.

The first ceremony of Hallow-Eve consisted in the lads and lasses pulling each a stock, or plant of kail. They were to go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and to pull the first they met with. Its being big or little, straight or crooked, was prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells — the husband or wife. If any yird, or earth, stuck to the root, that was considered as the *tocher*, or fortune; and the taste of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, was deemed indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their ordinary appellation, the runts, were placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brought into the house, were, according to the priority of placing the *runts*, the names in question.

In the second, the lasses were to go to the barn-yard, and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wanted the *top-pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question would come to the marriage-bed any thing but a maid.

* Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

The third depended on the burning of nuts, and was a favourite charm both in England and Scotland. A lad and lass were named to each particular nut, as they laid them in the fire, and accordingly as they burnt quietly together, or started from beside each other, the course and issue of the courtship were to be determined.

In the fourth, success could only be obtained by strictly adhering to the following directions. Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the pot, a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one: and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand, who holds it? and an answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the christian and surname of your future spouse.

To perform the fifth, you were to take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; you were then to eat an apple before it, combing your hair all the time; when the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

The sixth was likewise a solitary charm, in which it was necessary to go alone and unperceived to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible, least the *being*, about to appear, should shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then you were to take the machine used in winnowing the corn, and go through all the attitudes of letting down the grain against the wind; and on the third repetition of this ceremony, an apparition would be seen passing through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure of your future companion for life, and also the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.

To secure an effective result from the seventh, you were ordered to take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a Bear-stack, and fathom it three times round; when during the last fathom of the last time, you would be sure to catch in your arms the appearance of your destined yoke-fellow.

In order to carry the eighth into execution, one or more were enjoined to seek a south running spring or rivulet, where "three laird lands meet," and to dip into it the left shirt-sleeve. You were then to go to bed in sight of a fire, and to hang the wet sleeve before it to dry; it was necessary, however, to lie awake, when at midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the future husband or wife, would come, and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.*

For the due performance of the ninth, you were directed to take three dishes; to put clean water in one, foul water in another, and to leave the third empty: you were then to blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes were ranged, ordering him to dip the left hand; when, if this happened to be in the clean water, it was a sign that the future conjugal mate would come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretold, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. This ceremony was to be repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes was to be altered. †

* The powers of description which Burns has evinced in one of the stanzas, while relating the effects of this spell, are truly great:—

"A wanton widow Leezie was
As canty as a kittlen;
But och! that night, among the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed screevin,
Where three lairds lands met at a burn,
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;

Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazle,
Unseen that night.

Among the brachens, on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' gae a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool,
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night."

† Burn's Works, Currie's edit. vol. iii. p. 126. et seq.

Such are the various superstitions which were formerly observed at peculiar periods of the year, and which still maintain a certain portion of credit among the peasantry of Scotland and the North of England. To the catalogue of Saints thus loaded with the rites of popular credulity, may be added one whose celebrity seems to be entirely founded on the casual notice of Shakspeare. In his Tragedy of King Lear, Edgar introduces St. Withold as an opponent, and a protector against the assaults, of that formidable Incubus, the Night-mare :

“ Saint Withold footed thrice the wold ;
He met the Night-mare, and her nine-fold ;
Bid her alight,
And her troth plight,
And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee ! ”

Act iii. sc. 4.

Warburton informs us, that this agency of the Saint is taken from a story of him in his legend, and that he was thence invoked as the patron saint against the distemper, called the night-mare; but Mr. Tyrwhitt declares, that he could not find this adventure in the common legends of St. Vitalis, whom he supposes to be synonymous with St. Withold. It is probable that Shakspeare took the hint, for the ascription of this achievement to Withold, from Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, where a similar power is attributed to St. George. That writer, after mentioning that there are magical cures for the night-mare, gives the following as an example : —

“ St. George, S. George, our ladies knight,
He walkt by daie, so did he by night :
Untill such time as he hir found,
He hir beat and he hir bound.
Untill hir troth she to him plight,
She would not come to hir (him) that night : ” *

a form which is quoted nearly verbatim, and professedly as a night-spell, in the Monsieur Thomas of Fletcher. † It should be observed, that the influence over

* Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 87.

† It would appear from the passage just quoted from Shakspeare, that he considered St. Withold as commanding this *female* incubus to alight from those *she* was riding and tormenting; but Fuseli and Darwin, in their delineations, appear to have mounted a *male* fiend, or incubus, on *her* back, who descending from his steed, sate on the breasts of those whom *he* had selected for his victims. The personifications of the painter and the modern poet are forcibly drawn and highly terrific : —

“ So on his NIGHTMARE through the evening fog
Flits the squab Fiend o'er fen, and lake, and bog ;
Seeks some love-wilder'd Maid with sleep oppress'd,
Alights, and grinning sits upon her breast.
— Such as of late amid the murky sky
Was mark'd by FUSELI's poetic eye ;
Whose daring tints, with SHAKSPEARE's happiest grace,
Gave to the airy phantom form and place—
Back o'er her pillow sinks her blushing head,
Her snow-white limbs hang helpless from the bed ;
While with quick sighs, and suffocative breath,
Her interrupted heart-pulse swims in death.
— Then shrieks of captur'd towns, and widow's tears,
Pale lovers stretch'd upon their blood-stain'd biers,
The headlong precipice that thwarts her flight,
The trackless desert, the cold starless night,
And stern-eye'd Murderer with his knife behind,
In dread succession agonize her mind.
O'er her fair limbs convulsive tremors fleet,
Start in her hands, and struggle in her feet ;
In vain to scream with quivering lips she tries,
And strains in palsy'd lids her tremulous eyes ;
In vain she *wills* to run, fly, swim, walk, creep ;
The WILL presides not in the bower of SLEEP.
— On her fair bosom sits the Demon-Ape
Erect, and balances his bloated shape ;
Rolls in their marble orbs his Gorgon-eyes,
And drinks with leathern ears her tender cries.”

Botanic Garden, 4to. edit. p. 101—103.

incubi ascribed by our poet to St. Withold, has been subsequently given to other Calendarian saints, and especially to that dreaded personage St. Swithin, who is indebted to Mr. Colman, in his alteration of *Lear*, for the transference of this singular power.

The mass of popular credulity, indeed, is so enormous, that, limited, as we are in this chapter, to the consideration of only a portion of the subject, it is still difficult, from the number and variety of the materials, to present a sketch which shall be sufficiently distinct and perspicuous. It is highly interesting, however, to observe to what striking poetical purposes Shakspeare has converted these imbecilities of mind, these workings of fear and ignorance; how by his management almost every article which he has selected from the mass of vulgar delusion, assumes a capability of impressing the strongest and most cultivated mind with grateful terror or sublime emotion. No branch, for instance, of the popular creed has been more extended, or more burdened with folly, than the belief in Omens, and yet what noble imagery has not the poet drawn forth from this accumulation of fear-struck fancy and childish apprehension.

With the view of placing the detail of this vast group in a clearer light, it will be necessary to ascertain, what were the principal omens most accredited in the days of Shakspeare, and after giving a catalogue of those most worthy of notice, to exhibit a few pictures by the poet as founded on some of the most remarkable articles in the enumeration, and afterwards to fill up the outline with additional circumstances from other resources.

How prone the subjects of Elizabeth were to pry into futurity, through the medium of omens, auguries, and prognostications, may be learnt from the following passage in *Scot*, taken from his chapter on the "Common peoples fond and superstitious collections and observations."

"Amongst us," says he, "there be manie wemen and effeminat men (manie papists alwaies, as by their superstition may appeere) that make great divinations upon the shedding of salt, wine, etc., and for the observation of daies, and houres use as great witchcraft as in anie thing. For if one chance to take a fall from a horse, either in a slipperie or stumbling waie, he will note the daie and houre, and count that time unlucky for a journie. Otherwise, he that receiveth a mischance, will consider whether he met not a cat, or a hare, when he went first out of his doores in the morning; or stumbled not at the threshold at his going out; or put not on his shirt the wrong side outwards; or his left shoo on his right foote.

"Many will go to bed againe, if they sneeze before their shooes be on their feet; some will hold fast their left thombe in their right hand when they hickot; or else will hold their chinne with their right hand whiles a gospell is soong. It is thought verie ill lucke of some, that a child or anie living creature should passe betweene two friends as they walke together; for they say it portendeth a devision of friendship.—The like follie is to be imputed unto them, that observe (as true or probable) old verses, wherein can be no reasonable cause of such effects: which are brought to passe onlie by God's power, and at his pleasure. Of this sort be these that follow:

"Remember on S. Vincent's daie,
If that the sunne his beames displaie.—

If Paule th' apostles daie be cleare,
It doth foreshew a luckie yeare.—

If Maries purifieng daie,
Be cleare and bright with sunnie raie,
Then frost and cold shall be much more,
After the feast than was before, &c."*

In the almanacks of Elizabeth's and James's reigns, it was customary, not only to mark the days supposed to have an influence over the weather, but to distinguish, likewise, those considered as lucky or unlucky for making bargains, or transacting business on; and, accordingly, Webster represents a character in one of his plays declaring—

* *Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 203—205.

" By the almanack, I think
To choose good days and shun the critical ; " *

and Shakspeare, referring to the same custom and the same doctrine, makes Constance in King John exclaim,—

" What hath this day deserv'd ? What hath it done ;
That it in golden letters should be set,
Among the high tides, in the kalendar ?
Nay rather —————
————— if it must stand still, let wives with child
Pray, that their burdens may not fall this day,
Lest that their hopes prodigiously be cross'd :
But (except) on this day, let seamen fear no wreck ;
No bargains break, that are not this day made :
This day, all things begun come to an ill end ;
Yea, faith itself to hollow falsehood change ! " Act iii. sc. 1.

But of omens predictive of good and bad fortune, or of the common events in life, the catalogue may be said to have no termination, and we must refer the reader, for this degrading display of human weakness and folly, to the *Vulgar Errors of Browne*, and to the *Commentaries of Brand on Bourne's Antiquities*, confining the subject to that class of the ominous which has been deemed portentive of the great, the dreadful, and the strange, and which, being surrounded by a certain degree of dignity and awe, is consequently best adapted to the genius of poetry.

That danger, death, or preternatural occurrences should be preceded by warnings or intimations, would appear conformable to the idea of a superintending Providence, and therefore faith in such omens has been indulged in, by almost every nation, especially in the infancy of its civilisation. The most usual monitions of this kind are, " Lamentings heard in the air ; shakings and tremblings of the earth ; sudden gloom at noon-day ; the appearance of meteors ; the shooting of stars ; eclipses of the sun and moon ; the moon of a bloody hue ; the shrieking of owls ; the croaking of ravens ; the shrilling of crickets ; the night-howling of dogs ; the clicking of the death-watch ; the chattering of pies ; the wild neighing of horses, their running wild and eating each other ; the cries of fairies ; the gibbering of ghosts ; the withering of bay-trees ; showers of blood ; blood dropping thrice from the nose ; horrid dreams ; demoniacal voices ; ghastly apparitions ; winding sheets ; corpse-candles ; night-fires, and strange and fearful noises." Of the greater part of this tremendous list Shakspeare has availed himself ; introducing them as the precursors of murder, sudden death, disasters and superhuman events. Thus, previous to the assassination of Julius Cæsar, he tells us, that—

" In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets—
— Stars with trains of fire and dews of blood ' appear'd,'
Disasters in the sun ; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to dooms-day with eclipse : " *Hamlet*, act i. sc. 1.

and again, as predictive of the same event, he adds, in another place—

————— " There is one within,
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
A lioness hath whelped in the streets ;
And graves have yawn'd and yielded up their dead :
Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,
In ranks, and squadrons, and right form of war,
Which drizzled blood upon the capitol :

* The Dutchesse of Malfy, act iii. sc. 3. Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii. p. 526.

The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses do neigh, and dying men did groan;
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets."

Julius Cæsar, act iii. sc. 2.

The circumstances which are related as preceding and accompanying the murder of Duncan are, perhaps, still more awful and impressive. "The night," says Lennox,

—————" has been unruly : where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down : and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air ; strange screams of death ;
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to the woeful time. The obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night : some say, the earth
Was feverous, and did shake.

Macb.

'Twas a rough night."

" *Old M.* Threescore and ten I can remember well :
Within the volume of which time, I have seen
Hours dreadful, and things strange ; but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings.

Rosse.

Ah, good father,

Thou see'st the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threaten his bloody stage : by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp :
Is it night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth intomb,
When living light should kiss it?

Old M.

'Tis unnatural,

Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at, and kill'd.

Rosse. And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain),
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind.

Old M.

'Tis said, they eat each other.

Rosse. Thy did so ; to the amazement of mine eyes,
That look'd upon't."

Macbeth, Act ii. sc. 3.

In the play of King Richard II. also, the poet has with great taste and skill selected the following prodigies, as forerunners of the death or fall of kings :—

" 'Tis thought, the king is dead ; we will not stay.
The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd,
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven ;
The pale-fac'd moon looks bloody on the earth,
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change ;
Rich men look sad, and ruffians dance and leap,—
The one, in fear to lose what they enjoy,
The other, to enjoy by rage and war :
These signs forerun the death or fall of kings."

Act ii. sc. 4.

Omens of the same portentous kind are said to have attended the births of Owen Glendower and Richard III., and Shakspeare has accordingly availed himself of the tradition in a manner equally poetical and striking ; the former says of himself,—

—————" At my nativity,
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burnings cressets ; and, at my birth,
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shak'd like a coward :—
The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds
Were strangely clamorous to the frightened fields : "

Henry IV. Part I. act. iii. sc. 1.

and Henry VI., in his interview with Richard in the Tower, reproaching the tyrant for his cruelties, tells him, as indicative of his future deeds, that

“ The owl shriek’d at thy birth, an evil sign ;
The night-crow cried, aboding luckless time ;
Dogs howl’d, and hideous tempests shook down trees ;
The raven rook’d her on the chimney’s top,
And chattering pies in dismal discords sung.”

Henry IV. Part III. Act v. sc. 6.

Dreams, considered as prognostics of good or evil, are frequently introduced by Shakspeare.

“ My dreams will sure prove ominous to day,”

exclaims Andromache; * while Romeo declares,

“ My dreams presage some joyful news at hand.” *Act v. sc. 1.*

But it is chiefly as precursors of misfortune that the poet has availed himself of their supposed influence as omens of future fate. There are few passages in his dramas more terrific than the dreams of Richard the Third and Clarence; the latter, especially, is replete with the most fearful imagery, and makes the blood run chill with horror.

“ Demoniacal voices and shrieks, or monitory intimations and appearances” from the tutelary genius of a family, were likewise imagined to precede the deaths of important individuals; a superstition to which Shakspeare alludes in the following lines from his *Troilus and Cressida* :

“ *Troil.* Hark ! you are call’d : Some say, the Genius so
Cries, *Come !* to him that instantly must die.” *Act iv. sc. 4.*

This superstition was formerly very prevalent in England, and still prevails in several districts of Ireland, and in the more remote parts of the Highlands of Scotland. Howell tells us, that he saw at a lapidary’s in 1632, a monumental stone, prepared for four persons of the name of Oxenham, before the death of each of whom, the inscription stated a white bird to have appeared and fluttered around the bed, while the patient was in the last agony;† and Glanville, remarks Mr Scott, mentions one family, the members of which received this solemn sign by music, the sound of which floated from the family-residence, and seemed to die in a neighbouring ‡ wood. It is related, that several of the great Highland families are accustomed to receive intimations of approaching fate by domestic spirits or tutelary genii, who sometimes assume the form of a bird or of a bloody spectre of a tall woman dressed in white, shrieking wildly round the house. Thus, observes Mr. Pennant, the family of Rothmuras had the Bodach-an-dun, or the Ghost of the Hill; the Kinchardines, the Spectre of the Bloody Hand; Gartinley house was haunted by Bodach-Gartin; and Tullock Gorms by Maugh-Monlach, or the Girl with the Hairy Left Hand. In certain places, he says, the death of the people is supposed to be foretold by the cries of Benshie, or the Fairy’s Wife, uttered along the very path where the funeral is to pass; and it has been added by others, that when the Benshie becomes visible, she appears in the shape of an old woman, with a blue mantle and streaming hair.

Of this omen, and of another of a similar kind, Mr. Scott has made his usual poetical use in the *Lady of the Lake*, where he relates of Brian, the lone Seer of the Desert, that

“ Late had he heard in prophet’s dream,
The fatal Ben-Shie’s boding scream,

* *Troilus and Cressida*, act v. sc. 3.

† *Lady of the Lake*, p. 348.

‡ *Familiar Letters*, edit. 1726. p. 247.

Sounds, too, had come in midnight blast,
Of charging steeds, careering fast
Along Benharrow's shingly side,
Where mortal horseman ne'er might ride."

This last passage, he informs us, "is still believed to announce death to the ancient Highland family of M'Lean of Lochbuy. The spirit of an ancestor, slain in battle, is heard to gallop along a stony bank, and then to ride thrice around the family-residence, ringing his fairy bridle, and thus intimating the approaching calamity."

That the apparition of the Benshie, and the whole train of spectral and demoniacal warnings, were in full force in Ireland, during the seventeenth century, we have numerous proofs; the former was commonly called the Shrieking Woman, and of the latter a most remarkable instance is given by Mr. Scott, from the MS. Memoirs of the accomplished Lady Fanshaw.

"Her husband, Sir Richard, and she, chanced, during their abode in Ireland, to visit a friend, the head of a sept, who resided in the ancient baronial castle, surrounded with a moat. At midnight, she was awakened by a ghastly and supernatural scream, and looking out of bed, beheld, by the moonlight, a female face and part of the form hovering at the window. The distance from the ground, as well as the circumstance of the moat, excluded the possibility that what she beheld was of this world. The face was that of a young and rather handsome woman, but pale, and the hair, which was reddish, loose and dishevelled. The dress, which Lady Fanshaw's terror did not prevent her remarking accurately, was that of the ancient Irish. This apparition continued to exhibit itself for some time, and then vanished with two shrieks similar to that which had first excited Lady Fanshaw's attention. In the morning, with infinite terror, she communicated to her host what she had witnessed, and found him prepared not only to credit, but to account for the apparition. 'A near relation of my family,' said he, 'expired last night in this castle. We disguised our certain expectation of the event from you, lest it should throw a cloud over the cheerful reception which was your due. Now, before such an event happens in this family and castle, the female spectre whom you have seen is always visible. She is believed to be the spirit of a woman of inferior rank, whom one of my ancestors degraded himself by marrying, and whom afterwards, to expiate the dishonour done to his family, he caused to be drowned in the castle moat.'"

Another set of omens predictive of disaster, supernatural agency, and death, was drawn from the appearances of lights, tapers, and fires. When a flame was seen by night resting on the tops of soldiers' lances, or playing and leaping by fits among the masts and sails of a ship, it was deemed the presage of misfortune; of defeat in battle in the one instance, and of destruction by tempest in the other. As the forerunner of a storm, Shakspeare has introduced it in his *Tempest*, where Ariel says—

—————"Sometimes I'd divide
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
Then meet and join."

Act v. sc. 2.

It was also conceived, that the presence of unearthly beings, ghosts, spirits, and demons, was instantly announced by an alteration in the tint of the lights which happened to be burning; a very popular notion, which the poet adopts in his *Richard the Third*, the tyrant exclaiming, as he awakens,

"*The lights burn blue*—it is now dead midnight;
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.——
Methought, the souls of all that I had murder'd,
Came to my tent."

Act i. sc. 3.

But the chief superstition annexed to this branch of omens, was founded on the idea, that lights and fires, commonly called corpse-candles and tomb-fires, preceded deaths and funerals; an article of belief which was equally prevalent among the Celtic and Teutonic nations; and was cherished therefore with the same credulity in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, as in Scandinavia, Germany, and England. In

this island, during the sixteenth century, it was generally credited by the common people, that when a person was about to die, a pale flame would frequently appear at the window of the room in which he was laid, and, after pausing there for a moment, would glide towards the church-yard, minutely tracing the path where the future funeral was to pass, and glowing brightly, for a time, on the spot where the body was to be interred. Sometimes, however, instead of lights, a procession was seen by the dim light of the moon: "there have bin seene some in the night," says the English Lavaterus, "when the moone shin'd, going solemnlie with the corps, according to the custome of the people, or standing before the dores, as if some bodie were to be carried to the church to burying." * In Northumberland the fancied appearance of the corpse-light was termed seeing the Waff (the blast or spirit) of the person whose death was to take place.

In Wales this superstition was formerly so general, especially in the counties of Cardigan, Caermarthen, and Pembroke, that scarcely any individual was supposed to die without the previous signal of a corpse-candle. Mr. Davis, a Welshman, in a letter to Mr. Baxter, observes, that

"They are called candles, from their resemblance, not of the body of the candle, but the fire; because that fire doth as much resemble material candle-lights, as eggs do eggs: saving that in their journey, these candles are sometimes visible, and sometimes disappear; especially if any one comes near to them, or in the way to meet them. On these occasions they vanish, but presently appear again behind the observer, and hold on their course. If a little candle is seen, of a pale or bluish colour, then follows the corpse, either of an abortive, or some infant; if a large one, then the corpse of some one come to age. If there be seen two, three, or more, of different sizes,—some big, some small,—then shall so many corpses pass together, and of such ages or degrees. If two candles come from different places, and be seen to meet, the corpses will do the same; and if any of these candles be seen to turn aside, through some bye-path leading to the church, the following corpse will be found to take exactly the same way." †

Among the Highlanders of Scotland, likewise, the same species of omen was so implicitly credited, that it has continued in force even to the present day. Of this Mrs. Grant has given us, in one of her ingenious essays, a most remarkable instance, and on the authority, too, of a very pious and sensible clergyman, who was accustomed, she says,

"To go forth and meditate at even; and this solitary walk he always directed to his church-yard, which was situated in a shaded spot, on the banks of a river. There, in a dusky October evening, he took his wonted path, and lingered, leaning on the churchyard-wall, till it became twilight, when he saw two small lights rise from a spot within, where there was no stone, nor memorial of any kind. He observed the course these lights took, and saw them cross the river, and stop at an opposite hamlet. Presently they returned, accompanied by a larger light, which moved on between them, till they arrived at the place from which the first two set out, when all the three seemed to sink into the earth together.

"The good man went into the churchyard, and threw a few stones on the spot where the lights disappeared. Next morning he walked out early, called for the sexton, and shewed him the place, asking him if he remembered who was buried there. The man said, that many years ago, he remembered burying in that spot, two young children, belonging to a blacksmith on the opposite side of the river, who was now a very old man. The pastor returned, and was scarce sat down to breakfast, when a message came to hurry him to come over to pray with the smith, who had been suddenly taken ill, and who died next day." ‡

Fiery and meteoreous exhalations, shooting through the lower regions of the air, and sinking into the ground, were also deemed predictive of death. The individual was pointed out by these fires either falling on his lands or garden, or by gleaming with a lurid light over the family burying-place. Appearances of this kind were called tomb-fires by the Scandinavians, and *tan-we* by the Welsh, who believed that no freeholder died without a meteor having been seen to sparkle

* Of Ghostes and Spirites, 1572. p. 79.

† Vide Grose's Provincial Glossary, article Popular Superstitions, p. 282, 283.

‡ Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland, vol. i. p. 259, 261.

and vanish on his estate. In fact, as Shakspeare has expressed it, there could happen

“No natural exhalations in the sky :”

but were considered as

————— “prodigies, and signs,
Abortives, presages, and tongues of Heaven.”

The idea that sudden and fearful noises are frequently heard before death takes place, and are indications of such an event, was very common at the period of which we are writing, both on the Continent and in this country.

“It happeneth many times,” says the English Lavaterus, “that when men lye sicke of some deadly disease, there is something heard going in the chamber, like as the sicke men were wonte, when they were in good health : yea and the sicke parties themselves do many times heare the same, and by and by gesse what will come to passe. And divers times it commeth to passe, that when some of our acquaintance or friends lye a dying, albeit they are many miles off, yet there are some great stirrings or noises heard. Sometimes we think that the house will fall on our heads, or that some massie and waightie thing falleth downe throughout all the house, rendring and making a disordered noise : and shortlie within few monthes after, we understand that those things happened, the very same houre that our friends departed in. There be some men of whose stocke none doth dye, but that they observe and marke some signes and tokens going before : as that they heare the dores and windowes open and shut, that some thing runneth up the staires, or walketh up and downe the house, or doth some one or other such like thing.

“There was a certain parishe priest, a very honest and godly man, whom I knewe well, who in the plague time could tell beforehand, when any of his parishe should dye. For in the night time he heard a noise over his bed, like as if one had throwne downe a sacke full of corne from his shoulders : which when he heard he would say : Nowe an other biddeth me farewell. After it was day, he used to inquire who died that night, or who was taken with the plague, to the end that he might comfort and strengthen them, according to the duty of a good pastour.

“In Abbeyes, the Monks, servaunts or any other falling sicke, many have heard in the night preparation of chests for them, in such sorte as the coffin-makers did afterwards prepare in deede.

“In some country villages, when one is at death’s dore, many times there are some heard in the evening, or in the night, digging a grave in the Churcheyarde, and the same the next day is so found digged, as these men did heare before.” *

The next class of superstitions which we shall notice in this chapter, is that depending on charms and spells, a fertile source of knavery and credulity, and which has been chiefly exercised, in our poet’s time and since, by old women. Of this occupation, and its attendant folly and imposition, the bard has given us a sketch, in his *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in the person of the Old Woman of Brentford, who is declared by Ford to be “a witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! — We are simple men ; we do not know what’s brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by the figure, and such daubery as this is ; beyond our element : we know nothing.” — Act iv. sc. 2.

That women of this description, or as Scot has delineated them, in one instance, indeed, deviating from the portly form of Shakspeare’s cunning Dame, “leane, hollow-eied, old, beetle browed women,” † were, as dealers in charms, spells and amulets, a very numerous tribe, in the days of Elizabeth and James, we have every reason to believe, from contemporary evidence ; but it appears that the trade of fortune-telling was then, as now, chiefly exercised by the wandering horde of gipsies, to whose name and characteristic knavery our great poet alludes, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the Roman complains that Cleopatra,

“Like a right gipsy, hath, at *fast and loose*,
Beguil’d him to the very heart of loss.” Act iv. sc. 10.

Of this wily people, of the juggle referred to in these lines, and of their pro—

* Of Ghostes and Spirites, p. 77—79.

† Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 279.

fession of fortune-telling, Scot thus speaks in his thirteenth book:—“ The Egyptians juggling witchcraft or sortilegie standeth much in fast or loose, whereof though I have written somewhat generallie already (p. 197), yet having such opportunitie I will here shew some of their particular feats; not treating of their common tricks which is so tedious, nor of their fortune-telling which is so impious; and yet both of them meere cousenages.”* He then describes two games of fast and loose; one with a handkerchief, and the other with whip-cords and beads; but as these much resemble the modern trick of pricking at the belt or girdle, explained by Sir J. Hawkins, in a note on the passage just quoted from our poet, it will not be necessary to notice them further in this place.

To palmistry, indeed, or the art of Divination by the lines of the hand, Shakspeare has allotted a great part of the second scene, in the first act of Antony and Cleopatra, no doubt induced to this by the topographical situation of the opening characters, the play commencing at Alexandria in Egypt.

He has also occasionally adverted in other dramas to the multitude of charms, spells, and periapts which were in use in his time; and he makes La Pucelle, in accordance with the necromantic powers attributed to her, solemnly invoke their assistance—

“ Now help, ye charming spells, and periapts;”—*Henry V. Part I. Act v. sc. 3.*

but as, to adopt the expression of Scot, he who “ should go about to recite all charmes, would take an infinite worke in hand,”† we shall confine ourselves to an enumeration, from this scarce and curious writer, of the evils and the powers, against, and for, which, these charms were sought; and shall then add a few specimens of their nature, force and composition. It appears that they were eagerly enquired after in the first place against burning, drowning, pestilence, sword, and famine, against thieves, spirits, witches, and diseases, and of the last class, especially against the venom of serpents, scorpions and other reptiles, the epilepsy, the king’s evil, and the bite of a mad dog; and in the second, to enable the wearer to release a woman in travail, to conjure a thorn out of any member, or a bone out of the throat, to open all locks and doors, to know what is said and done behind our backs, to endure the severest tortures without shrinking, etc. etc.

One of the most efficacious of these charms, was a periapt or tablet, called an *Agnus Dei*. This, which was ordered to be constantly worn round the neck, consisted of a little cake, having the impression of a lamb carrying a flag on one side, and Christ’s head on the other; and in the centre a concavity sufficiently large to contain the first chapter of St. John’s Gospel, written on fine paper, in a very small character. It was a spell potent to protect the wearer against thunder and lightning, fire and water, sin, pestilence, and the perils of childbirth.‡

A charm against shot, or a waistcoat of proof, was thus to be obtained:—

“ On Christmas daie at night, a thread must be sponne of flax, by a little virgine girle, in the name of the divell: and it must be by hir woven, and also wrought with the needle. In the brest or forepart thereof must be made with needle worke two heads; on the head at the right side must be a hat and a long beard; the left head must have on a crowne, and it must be so horrible, that it maie resemble Belzebub, and on each side of the wastcote must be made a crosse.”§

That some of these spells, however, were not carried into execution with quite so much ease as the two we have just transcribed, will be evident from the directions annexed to the following, entitled a charm for one possessed:

“ The possessed bodie must go upon his or hir knees to the church, how farre soever it be off from their lodging; and so must creepe without going out of the waie, being the common high waie, in that sort, how fowle and durtie soever the same be; or whatsoever lie in the waie, not shunning anie thing whatsoever, untill he come to the church, where he must heare masse devoutlie, and then followeth recoverie.”**

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 336.
§ *Ibid.* p. 231.

† *Ibid.* p. 279.
** *Ibid.* p. 247.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 230. 270.

It appears, notwithstanding, that, even among the old women of the sixteenth century, there could be found some who, while they profited by, could, at the same time, despise, the credulity of their neighbours.

“An old woman,” says Scot, “that healed all diseases of cattell (for the which she never tooke any reward but a penie and a loafe) being seriouslie examined by what words she brought these things to passe, confessed that after she had touched the sicke creature, she alwaies departed immediatlly ; saieng :

“ My loafe in my lap,
my penie in my pursse ;
Thou art never the better,
and I am never the wursse.” *

The same author, after relating the terrible curse or charm of St. Adelbert against thieves, facetiously adds,—

“ But I will answer this cruell cursse with another cursse farre more mild and civill, performed by as honest a man (I dare saie) as he that made the other.—

“ So it was, that a certeine sir John, with some of his companie, once went abroad a jetting, and in a moone light evening robbed a millers weire, and stole all his éeles. The poor miller made his mone to Sir John himselfe, who willed him to be quiet ; for he would so curse the theefe, and all his confederates, with bell, booke and candell, that they should have small joy of their fish. And therefore the next sundaie, Sir John got him to the pulpit, with his surplisse on his backe, and his stole about his necke, and pronounced these words following in the audience of the people :

All you that have stolne the miller's éeles,
Laudate Dominum de cœlis.
And all they that have consented thereto,
Benedicamus Domino.

So (saith he) there is sauce for your éeles my maisters.” †

A third portion of the popular creed may be considered as including the various kinds of superstitious Cures, Preventatives, and Sympathies ; a species of credulity which has suffered little diminution even in the present day ; for, though the materials selected for the purpose be different, the folly and the fraud are the same. Instead of animal magnetism and metallic tractors, the public faith, in the days of Shakspeare, rested, with implicit confidence, on the virtues supposed to be inherent in bones, precious stones, sympathetic signs, powders, etc. ; and the poet, accordingly, has occasionally introduced imagery founded on these imaginary qualities. Thus, in the Merchant of Venice, the high value which Shylock places on his turquoise ring, was derived from this source, the turquoise or Turkey-stone being considered as inestimable for its properties of indicating the health of the wearer by the increase or decrease of its colour, and for its protective power in shielding him from enmity and peril. That this was the cause of Shylock's deep regret for the loss of his ring, will appear probable from the more direct intimations of his contemporaries, Jonson and Drayton ; the former, in his Sejanus, remarking of two parasites, that they would,

“ — true, as turkoise in the dear lord's ring,
Look well or ill with him.” ‡

and the latter declaring, that

“ The turkesse, — who haps to wear,
Is often kept from peril.” §

A more distinct allusion to the sanative virtue of precious stones, is to be found in the celebrated simile in As You Like It :

“ Sweet are the uses of adversity :
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.” Act ii. sc. 1.

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 245.

‡ See Whalley's Works of Ben Jonson.

† Ibid. p. 265, 266.

§ Chalmers's Poets, vol. iv. p. 465.

This stone or jewel was supposed to secure the possessor from the effects of poison, and to be, likewise, a sovereign remedy for the stone.

These important effects are ascribed to it by numerous writers of Shakspeare's time, — by Gesner; * by Batman; † by Maplett; ‡ by Fenton; § by Lupton; ** by Topsell, and, subsequently, by Fuller. †† It even formed, very early indeed, a part of medical treatment; for Lloyd, in his "Treasure of helth," recommends its exhibition for the stone, and orders it, after having been stamp't, to be "geven to the pacyent to drinke in warme wine."

To the Bezoar stone also was attributed great potency in expelling the plague and other pestilential diseases; and Gesner has given it an origin even more marvellous than the cures for which it has been celebrated; "when the hart is sick," says he, "and hath eaten many serpents for his recoverie, he is brought unto so great a heate, that he hasteth to the water, and there covereth his body unto the very eares and eyes, at which time distilleth many teares from which the (Bezoar) stone is gendered." ‡‡

The Belemnites or hag-stones, perforated flints hung up at the 'bed's head, to prevent the night-mare, or in stables to secure the horses from being hag-ridden, and their manes elf-knotted, were at this period in common use. To one of the superstitious evils against which it was held as a protective, Shakspeare alludes, in his *Romeo and Juliet*, where Mercutio exclaims—

——— "This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night." Act i. sc. 4.

"It was believed," remarks Mr. Douce, commenting on this passage, "that certain malignant spirits whose delight was to wander in groves and pleasant places, assumed occasionally the likenesses of women clothed in white; that in this character they sometimes haunted stables in the night-time, carrying in their hands tapers of wax, which they dropped on the horses' manes, thereby plaiting them in inextricable knots, to the great annoyance of the poor animals and vexation of their masters. These hags are mentioned in the works of William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris in the thirteenth century. There is a very uncommon old print by Hans Burgmair relating to this subject. A witch enters the stable with a lighted torch; and, previously to the operation of entangling the horse's mane, practises her enchantments on the groom, who is lying asleep on his back, and apparently influenced by the night-mare." §§

The most copious account of the preservative and curative virtues which credulity has ascribed to precious stones, is to be drawn from the pages of Reginald Scot, who appears faithfully and minutely to have recorded the superstitions of his day.

"An Agat (they saie) hath vertue against the biting of scorpions or serpents. It is written (but I will not stand to it) that it maketh a man eloquent, and procureth the favour of princes; yea, that the fume thereof dooth turn awaie tempests. Alectorius is a stone about the bignesse of a beane, as cleere as the christall, taken out of a cocks bellie which hath been gelt or made a capon foure years. If it be held in ones mouth, it assuageth thirst, it maketh the husband to love the wife, and the bearer invincible:—Chelidonium is a stone taken out of a swallowe, which cureth melancholie: howbeit, some authors saie, it is the hearbe whereby the swallowes recover the sight of their yoong, even if their eies be picked out with an instrument. Geranites is taken out of a crane and Draconites out of a dragon. But it is to be noted, that such stones must be taken out of the bellies of the serpents, beasts or birds (wherein they are) whiles they live: otherwise, they vanish awaie with the life, and so they reteine the vertues of those starres under which they are. Amethysus maketh a droonken man sober, and refresheth the wit. The corall preserveth such as bear it from fascination or bewitching, and in this respect they are hanged about children's necks. But from whence that superstition is derived, and who invented the lie, I knowe not:

* De Quadrup. Ovip., p. 65.

† Batman upon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, 1582, fol. article Botrax.

‡ A Green Forest, or a Natural History, 1567.

§ Secrete Wonders of Nature, 4to. 1569.

** First Book of Notable Things, 4to.

†† Topsell's History of Serpents, 1608. fol., p. 188. and Fuller's Church History, p. 151.

‡‡ Quoted by Batman on Bartholome, L. xviii. c. 30.

§§ Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 180, 181.

but I see how redie the people are to give credit thereunto, by the multitude of coralls that waie employed. Heliotropius stauncheth bloud, driveth awaie poisons, preserveth health: yea, and some write that it provoketh raine, and darkeneth the sunne, suffering not him that beareth it to be abused. Hyacinthus dooth all that the other dooth, and also preserveth from lightening. Dinothera hanged about the necke, collar, or yoke of any creature, tameth it presentlie. A Topase healeth the lunatike person of his passion of lunacie. Aitites, if it be shaken, soundeth as if there were a little stone in the bellie thereof: it is good for the falling sicknesse, and to prevent untimelie birth. Chalcedonius maketh the bearer luckie in lawe, quickeneth the power of the bodie, and is force also against the illusions of the divell, and phantasticall cogitations arising of melancholie. Corneolus mitigateth the heate of the mind, and qualifieth malice, it stancheth bloudie fluxes. Iris helpeth a woman to speedy deliverance, and maketh rainebowes to appeere. A Sapphire preserveth the members, and maketh them livelie, and helpeth agues and gowts, and suffereth not the bearer to be afraid: it hath vertue against venome, and staieth bleeding at the nose, being often put thereto. A Smarag is good for the eiesight, and maketh one rich and eloquent. Mephis (as Aaron and Hermes report out of Albertus Magnus) being broken into powder, and droonke with water, maketh insensibilitie of torture. Hereby you may understand, that as God hath bestowed upon these stones, and such other like bodies, most excellent and woonderfull vertues: so according to the abundance of humane superstitions and follies, many ascribe unto them either more virtues, or others than they have." *

This passage has been closely imitated by Drayton, in the ninth Nymphal of his Muse's Elysium; † he has made, however, some additions to the catalogue, one of which we have already noticed, and another will be shortly quoted.

Virtues of a kind equally miraculous were attributed to bones and horns; thus Scot tells us, that a bone taken out of a carp's head staunches blood; that the bone in a hare's foot mitigates the cramp, and that the unicorn's horn is inestimable; ‡ and were we to enumerate the wonders performed by herbs, we might fill a volume. Many of them, indeed, were considered of such potency as to render the persons who rightly used them, either invisible or invulnerable, and, therefore, to those who were engaged to fight a legal duel, an oath was administered, purporting "that they had ne charme, ne herbe of vertue" about them.

Several diseases were held to be incurable, by ordinary means; such as wens, warts, the king's evil, agues, rickets, and ruptures; and the remedies which were adopted present a most deplorable instance of human folly. Tumours were to be dispelled by stroking them nine times with a dead man's hand, and the evil by the royal touch, a miraculous power supposed to have been first exercised by Edward the Confessor, and to have been since hereditary in the royal line, at least to the period of the decease of Queen Anne. Of the discharge of this important function by the Confessor, and of its regal descent, our poet has left us a pretty accurate description:—

"*Malcolm.* ——— Comes the king forth, I pray you?

Doctor. Ay, Sir: there are a crew of wretched souls,

That stay his cure: their malady convinces

The great assay of art; but, at his touch,

Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,

They presently amend.

Macduff. What's the disease he means?

Mal. 'Tis call'd the evil:

A most miraculous work in this good king;

Which often, since my here-remain in England,

I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,

Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people,

All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,

The mere despair of surgery, he cures;

Hanging a golden stamp § about their necks,

Put on with holy prayers: and 'tis spoken,

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 293—295.

† Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 465.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 305.

§ This golden stamp was the coin called an angel, from the figure which it bore, and was worth ten shillings.

To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction."

Macbeth, act iv. sc. 3.

That Shakspeare had frequently witnessed Queen Elizabeth's exercise of this extraordinary gift, is very probable; for it appears from Laneham, that even on her visits to her nobility, she was in the habit of exerting this sanative power. In his "Account of the Entertainment at Kenelworth Castle," he records "by her highness accustomed mercy and charitee, nyne cured of the peynful and dangerous diseaz called the King's Evil, for that kings and queens of this realm without oother medsin (than by touching and prayer) only doo it." *

Most of the superstitious cures for warts and agues remain as articles of popular credulity; but the mode of removing ruptures and the rickets which prevailed at this period, and for some centuries before, is now nearly, if not altogether extinct. A young tree was split longitudinally, and the diseased child, being stripped naked, was passed, with the head foremost, thrice through the fissure. The wounded tree was then drawn together with a cord so as to unite it perfectly, and as the tree healed, the child was to acquire health and strength. The same result followed if the child crept through a stone perforated by some operation of Nature; of stones of this kind there are some instances in Cornwall, and Mr. Borlase tells us, in his History of that County, that there was one of this description in the parish of Marden, which had a perforation through it fourteen inches in diameter, and was celebrated for its cures on those who ventured, under these complaints, to travel through its healing aperture.

The doctrine of sympathetic indications and cures was very prevalent during the era of Elizabeth and James, and is repeatedly insisted upon by the writers of that age. One of the most generally credited of these was, that a murdered body bled upon the touch or approach of the murderer; an idea which has not only been adopted by our elder bards as poetically striking, but has been adduced, as a truth, by some of our very grave writers in prose. Among the Dramatists it will be sufficient to produce Shakspeare, who represents the corpse of Henry the Sixth as bleeding on the approach of the Tyrant Richard:—

" O, gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
Open their congeal'd mouths, and bleed afresh!
Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
Provokes this deluge most unnatural:"

Act i. sc. 2.

and Drayton seems to have been a firm believer in the same preternatural effect; for he informs us in his forty-sixth "Idea," that,

" In making trial of a murther wrought,
If the vile actors of the heinous deed,
Near the dead body happily be brought,
Oft't hath been prov'd the breathless corps will bleed."†

Of the prose authorities, besides Lupton, and Sir Kenelm Digby mentioned in the notes of the Variorum Edition of our author, Lavaterus, Reginald Scot, and King James may be quoted, as reposing an implicit faith in the miracle. The first of these writers tells us, in his English dress, of 1572, that "some men beeing slayne by theeves, when the theeves come to the dead body, by and by there gusheth out freshe blood, or else there is declaration by other tokens, that the theefe is there present;" and he then adds, "touching these and other such

* Nichols's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i.: and Scot, speaking of the pretensions of the French monarchs to cure the evil, observes of Elizabeth's practice, that "if the French king use it no worsse than our Princesse doth, God will not be offended thereat: for hir majestie onelie useth godlie and divine praier, with some almes, and referreth the cure to God and to the physician," p. 304, a report which reflects great credit on her majesty's judgment and good sense.

† Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 505.

marvellous things there might be many histories and testimonies alleaged. But whosoever readeth this booke, may call to their remembraunce, that they have seene these and suche like things themselves, or that they have heard them of their freends and acquaintaunce and of such as deserve sufficient credit." * The second, in 1584, justifying what he terms common experience, says, "I have heard by credible report, and I have read many grave authors constantlie affirme, that the wound of a man murthered reneweth bleeding, at the presence of a deere freend, or of a mortall enimie;" † and the third, in 1603, asserts, that "in a secret murther, if the dead carkasse bee at any time thereafter handled by the murtherer, it will gush out of bloud, as if the bloud were crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer, God having appointed that secret supernatural signe, for triall of that secured unnaturall crime." ‡

The influence of sympathy or affection, as it was termed at the period of which we are writing, over the passions and feelings of the human mind, is curiously though correctly exemplified by the poet, in the character of Shylock, who tells the Duke—

"Some men there are, love not a gaping pig;
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
And others, when the bag-pipe sings i' the nose,
Cannot contain their urine; for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes and loaths." *Merchant of Venice*, act iv. sc. 1.

Another sympathy mentioned by Shakspeare, but of a nature wholly superstitious, relates to the Mandrake, a vegetable, the root of which was supposed to be endued with animal life, and to shriek so horribly when drawn out of the ground, as to occasion madness, and even death, in those who made the attempt:—

—————"What with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad;
O! if I wake, shall I not be distraught?" *Romeo and Juliet*, act iv. sc. 3.

exclaims Juliet; and Suffolk, in King Henry the Sixth, declares that every joint of his body should curse and ban his enemies,

"Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan."—Act iii. sc. 2.

To avoid these dreadful effects, it was the custom of those who collected this root, to compel some animal to be the instrument of extraction, and consequently the object of punishment.

"They doe affyrme," says Bulleine, "that this herbe (the Mandragora) commeth of the seede of some convicted dead men: and also without the death of some lyvinge thinge it cannot be drawnen out of the earth to man's use. Therefore they did tye some dogge or other lyving beast unto the roote thereof wyth a corde, and digged the earth in compasse round about, and in the meane tyme stopp'd their own eares for feare of the terrible shriek and cry of this Mandrack. In whych cry it doth not only dye itselfe, but the feare thereof kylleth the dogge or beast which pulleth it out of the earth." §

One of the most fantastic sympathies which yet lingers in the popular creed, is founded on the idea that when a person is seized with a sudden shivering, some one is walking over his future grave. "Probably," remarks Mr. Grose, "all persons are not subject to this sensation; otherwise the inhabitants of those parishes, whose burial grounds lie in the common foot-path, would live in one continual fit of shaking." **

Of all the modes of sympathetic credulity, however, none was more prevalent

* Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, p. 80.

† Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 303.

‡ The Workes of the Most High and Mighty Prince James. fol. edit. 1616. p. 136. The Dæmonologie was first printed at Edinburgh in 1597, and next in London, 1603, 4to.

§ Bulwarke of Defence against Sickness, fol. 1579, p. 41.

** Grose's Provincial Glossary, p. 291.

in the reign of James the First, than that which pretended to the cure of wounds and diseases; no stronger proof, indeed, can be given of the credulity of that age, than that Bacon was a believer in the sympathetic cure of warts,* and, with James and his court, in the efficacy of Sir Kenelm Digby's sympathetic powder. To this far-famed medicine, the secret of which King James obtained from Sir Kenelm, it is said by the Knight himself, in his Discourse on Sympathy, that Mr. James Howel, the well-known author of the Letters, was indebted for a cure, when his hand was severely wounded in endeavouring to part two of his friends engaged in a duel. The King, out of regard to Howel, sent him his own surgeon; but a gangrene being apprehended, from the violence of the inflammation, the sufferer was induced to apply to Sir Kenelm, of whose mode of treatment he had heard the most wonderful accounts.

"I asked him," relates Digby, "for any thing that had the blood upon it; so he presently sent for his garter, wherewith his hand was first bound; and as I called for a bason of water, as if I would wash my hands, I took a handfull of powder of vitriol, which I had in my study, and presently dissolved it. As soon as the bloody garter was brought me, I put it within the bason, observing in the interim what Mr. Howel did, who stood talking with a gentleman in a corner of my chamber, not regarding at all what I was doing; but he started suddenly as if he had found some strange alteration in himself. I asked him what he ailed? 'I know not what ailes me; but I finde that I feel no more pain. Methinks that a pleasing kinde of freshnesse, as it were a wet cold napkin, did spread over my hand, which hath taken away the inflammation that tormented me before.' I reply'd, 'Since then that you feel already so good effect of my medicament, I advise you to cast away all your playsters; only keep the wound clean, and in a moderate temper betwixt heat and cold.' This was presently reported to the Duke of Buckingham, and a little after to the king, who were both very curious to know the circumstance of the businesse, which was, that after dinner I took the garter out of the water, and put it to dry before a great fire. It was scarce dry, but Mr. Howel's servant came running that his master felt as much burning as ever he had done, if not more: for the heat was such as if his hand were twixt coles of fire. I answered, although that had happened at present, yet he should find ease in a short time; for I knew the reason of this new accident, and would provide accordingly; for his master should be free from that inflammation, it may be before he could possibly return to him: but in case he found no ease, I wished him to come presently back again; if not, he might forbear coming. Thereupon he went; and at the instant I did put again the garter into the water, thereupon he found his master without any pain at all. To be brief, there was no sense of pain afterward; but within five or six dayes the wounds were cicatrized, and entirely healed." †

To this marvellous cure, which may in truth be attributed to the dismissal of the plasters, we may add that a similar sanative and sympathetic power was conceived to subsist between the wounds and the instrument which inflicted them. Thus anointing the weapon with a salve, or stroking it in a peculiar manner, had an immediate effect on the wounded person.

"They can remedie," says Scot, "anie stranger, and him that is absent, with that *verie sword* wherewith they are wounded. Yea, and that which is beyond all admiration, if they stroke the sworde upwards with their fingers, the partie shall feele no paine: whereas if they drawe their fingers downewards thereupon, the partie wounded shall feele intollerable paine." ‡

Independent of the superstitions which we have thus classed under distinct heads, there remain several to be noticed, not clearly referrible to any part of the above arrangement; but which cannot with propriety be omitted. These may, therefore, be collected under the term miscellaneous, which will be found to include many curious particulars, in no slight degree illustrative of the subject under consideration.

In the Tempest, towards the close of the fourth act, the poet represents Pros-

* Vide Bacon's Natural History, Century x. No. 997, 998.

† Digby's Discourse upon the Sympathetic Powder, p. 6.

‡ Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 280.

pero and Ariel setting on spirits, in the shape of hounds, to hunt Stephano and Trinculo, while, at the same time, a noise of hunters is heard. This species of diabolical or spectral chase was a popular article of belief, and is mentioned or alluded to in many of the numerous books which were written, during this period, on devils and spectres. Lavaterus, treating of the various modes in which spirits act, says, "heereunto belongeth those things which are reported touching the chasing or hunting of Divels, and also of the daunces of dead men, which are of sundrie sortes. I have heard of some which have avouched, that they have seene them;" * and in a translation from the French of Peter de Loier's "Treatise of Spectres," published in 1605, a chase of this kind is mentioned under the appellation of "Arthur's Chase," "which many," observes this writer, "believe to be in France, and think that it is a kennel of black dogs, followed by unknown huntsmen, with an exceeding great sound of horns, as if it was a very hunting of some wild beast."

Of a chase of this supernatural description, Boccacio, in the fourteenth century, made an admirable use in his terrific tale of Theodore and Honoria; a narrative which has received new charms and additional horrors from the masterly imitation of Dryden; and in our own days the same impressive superstition has been productive of a like effect in the spirited ballad of Burger.

The hell-hounds of Shakspeare appear to be sufficiently formidable; for, not merely commissioned to hunt their victims, they are ordered, likewise, as goblins, to

—————"grind their joints
With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps; and more pinch-spotted make them,
Than pard, or cat o'mountain.

Hark, (*exclaims Ariel*) they roar.

Prospero. Let them be hunted soundly." *Tempest*, act iv. sc. 1.

The punishments which our poet has assigned to sinners in the infernal regions, are most probably founded on the fictions of the monks, who, not content with the infliction of mere fire as a source of torment, condemn the damned to suffer the alternations of heat and cold; to experience the cravings of extreme hunger and thirst, and to be driven by whirlwinds through the immensity of space. In correspondence with these legendary horrors, are the descriptions attributed to Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, and to the Ghost in *Hamlet*:—

"*Claudio.* Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot:
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside,
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and uncertain thoughts
Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!" *Measure for Measure*, act iii. sc. 1.

—————"I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night;
And for the day, confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,
Are burnt and purg'd away." *Hamlet*, act i. sc. 5.

Imagery somewhat similar to this may be found in the vulgar Latin version of

* Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, p. 96.

Job xxiv. 19,* and in the Inferno and Purgatorio of Dante; † but Shakspeare had sufficient authorities in his own language. An old homily, quoted by Dr. Farmer, speaking of the pains of hell, says “the fyrste is fyre that ever brenneth, and never gyveth lighte; the seconde is passying cold, that yf a greate hylle of fyre were cast therein, it shold torne to yce;” and Chaucer, in his “Assemblie of Foules,” describing the situation of souls in hell, declares that

—— “breakers of the lawe, sothe to saine,
And lickerous folke, after that they been dede
Shall whirle about the world alway in paine
Till many a world be passed.” ‡

The same doctrine is taught in that once popular and curlous old work “The Shepherds’s Calendar,” which so frequently issued from the presses of Wynkyn De Worde, Pynson, and Julian Notary. Among the torments of the damned, the first enumerated

——— “is fire so hote to rekenne
That no manere of thyng may slekenne,
The secunde is colde as seith some
That no hete of fire may over come;”

and Lazarus, describing the punishment of the Envious, says,—“I have seen in hell a flood frozen as ice, wherein the *envious* men and women were plunged unto the navel; and then suddenly came over them a right cold and a great wind, that grieved and pained them right sore, and when they would evite and eschew the wonderful blasts of the wind, they plunged into water with great shouts and cries, lamentable to hear;” § and again in the eighteenth chapter of the same work, it is related, as the reward of them that keep the ten commandments of the Devil, that

—— “a great froste in a water rounes
And after a bytter wynde comes
Whiche gothe through the soules with yre.”

In the “Songes and Sonnets,” also, by Lord Surrey, and others, which were first published in 1557, the pains of hell are depicted as partaking of the like vicissitude:—

“The soules that lacked grace
Which lye in bitter paine,
Are not in suche a place,
As foolish folke do faine:

Tormented all with *fire*,
And boyle in leade againe—

Then cast in *frozen pites*,
To *freze* there certein howres.” **

Hunger and thirst, as forming part of the sufferings of the damned, are alluded to by Chaucer in his Parson’s Tale, †† and by Nash in one of his numerous pam-

* “Ad nimium calorem transeat ab aquis nivium.” In the paraphrase on Genesis, by Cedmon the Saxon poet, the same imagery may be found.

Of this venerable poet and monk, who flourished in the seventh century, Mr. Turner has given us a very interesting account, together with a version of some parts of his paraphrase. One of these is a picture of the infernal regions, in which he says,—

“There comes at last
the eastern wind,
the *cold frost*
mingling with the fires.”

Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons, 2d edit. 4to. 1807.
vol. ii. p. 309. et seq.

† Infer. c. iii. 86. Purgat. c. iii. 31.

§ Dibdin’s Typographical Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 534, 598.

** Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. ii. p. 424.

‡ Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. i. p. 330.

†† Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. i. p. 149.—“The mesere of helle shal be in defaute of mete and drink. For God sayth thus by Moyses; They shal be wasted with hunger, &c.”

phlets: "Whether," says he, speaking of hell, "it be a place of horror, stench, and darkness, where men see meat, but can get none, and are ever thirsty." *

Heywood in his "Hierarchie of Angels," † and Milton in his "Paradise Lost," have adopted Claudio's description of the infernal abode with regard to the interchange of heat and cold; the picture which the latter has drawn completely fills up the outline of Shakspeare:—

"Beyond ——— a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail——
Thither by harpy-footed furies hal'd,
At certain revolutions, all the damn'd
Are brought; and feel by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce,
From beds of raging fire, to starve in ice
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine
Immovable, infix'd, and frozen round,
Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire." ‡

The Platonic doctrine or superstition relative to the harmony of the spheres, and of the human soul, was a favourite embellishment, both in prose and poetry, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Spenser, Shakspeare, Hooker, Milton, have all adopted it as a mode of illustration, and it forms, in the works of our great Dramatist, one of his most splendid and beautiful passages:

"How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica: Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Merchant of Venice, act iii. sc. 1.

The opinion of Plato, as expressed in the tenth book of his "Republic" § and in his "Timæus," represents the music of the spheres as so rapid, sweet, and variously inflected, as to exceed all power in the human ear to measure its proportions, and consequently it is not to be heard of man, while resident in this fleshly mould. The same species of harmony is averred by Hooker** and Shakspeare to reside in the human soul; but, says the latter, "whilst this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close this music in, we cannot hear it:" that is, whilst the soul is immured in the body, it is neither conscious of its own harmony, nor of that existing in the spheres; but no sooner shall it be freed from this incumbrance, and become a pure spirit, than it shall be sensible both to its own concord of sweet sounds, and to that diapason or concentus which is addressed by the nine muses or syrens to the Supreme Being,

"That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne,
To Him that sits thereon." ††

Of the various superstitions relative to the Moon, which prevailed in the days of Shakspeare, a few are still retained. The most common is that founded on the

* Pierce Penniless, his Supplication to the Devil, 1595.

† Folio, 1635. p. 345.

‡ Paradise Lost, book ii. l. 587, et seq.

§ *Ex πασῶν δε*, &c. De Republ. lib. x. p. 520, Ludg. 1590. Vide Todd's Milton, vol. vii. p. 53.

** "Such notwithstanding, is the force there of (musical harmony), and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some have been thereby induced to think, that the soul itself by nature is or hath in it harmony."—Fifth Book of Ecclesiastical Polity, published singly in 1597.

†† Todd's Milton, vol. vii. p. 53.

idea of a human creature being imprisoned in this beautiful planet. The culprit was generally supposed to be the sinner recorded in Numbers, chap. xv. v. 32., who was found gathering sticks upon the sabbath day; a crime to which Chaucer has added the iniquity of theft; for he describes this singular inhabitant as

“ Bearing a bush of thornes on his backe,
Which for his *theft* might clime no ner the heven.” *

The Italians, however, appropriate this luminary for the residence of Cain, and one of their early poets even speaks of the planet under the term of “ Caino e le spine.” † Shakspeare, with his usual attention to propriety of character, attributes a belief in this superstition to the monster Caliban :

“ *Calib.* Hast thou not dropped from heaven ?

Steph. Out o’ the moon, I do assure thee : I was the man in the moon, when time was.

Cal. I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee ;
My mistress shewed me thee, thy dog and bush.” *Tempest*, act iii. sc. 1.

The influence of the moon over diseases bodily and intellectual ; its virtue in all magical rites ; its appearances as predictive of evil and good, and its power over the weather and over many of the minor concerns of life, such as the gathering of herbs, the killing of animals for the table, etc. etc. were much more firmly and universally accredited in the sixteenth century than at present ; although we must admit, that traces of all these credulities may still be found ; and that in medical science, the doctrine of lunar influence still, and to a certain extent perhaps with probability, exists.

Shakspeare addresses the moon as the “ sovereign mistress of true melancholy ;” ‡ tells us, that when “ she comes more near to the earth than she was wont,” she “ makes men mad ;” § and that, when she is “ pale in her anger—rheumatic diseases do abound.” ** He tells us, also, through the medium of Hecate, that

“ Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound,”

of power to compel the obedience of infernal spirits ; †† and that its eclipses, †† its sanguine colour, §§ and its apparent multiplication, *** are certain prognostics of disaster.

To kill hogs, to collect herbs, and to sow seed, when the moon was increasing, was deemed a most essential observance ; the bacon was better, the plants more effective, and the crops more abundant in consequence of this attention. Implicit confidence was also placed in the new moon as a prognosticator of the weather, according to its position, or the curvature of its horns ; and it was hailed by blessings and supplications ; the women especially, both in England and Scotland, were accustomed to curtesy to the new moon, and on the first night of its appearance the unmarried part of the sex would frequently, sitting astride on a gate or stile, invoke its influence in the following curious terms : —

“ All hail to the Moon, all hail to thee,
I prithee good moon declare to me,
This night who my husband shall be.”

The credulity of the country was particularly directed at this period, including the close of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, towards the numerous relations of the existence of monsters of various kinds ; and Shakspeare, who more than any other poet availed himself of the superstitious follies of his time, hath repeatedly both introduced, and satirized, these objects,

* Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. i. p. 296. col. 1.

† Antony and Cleopatra, act iv. sc. 9.

** Midsummer-Night’s Dream, act ii. sc. 2.

†† Lear, act i. sc. 2.; Othello, act v. sc. 2.

*** K. John, act iv. sc. 2.

† Dante’s Inferno, cant. xx.

§ Othello, act v. sc. 2.

†† Macbeth, act iii. sc. 5.

§§ Richard the Second, act ii. sc. 4.

as articles of, and excitors of the popular belief. His Caliban, a monster of his own creation, and, poetically considered, one of the most striking products of his imagination, will be noticed at length in another place, and we shall here confine ourselves to his description of the monsters which, as objects of historical record, had lately become the theme of credulous wonder and general speculation.

Othello, in his speech before the senators, familiarly alludes to

—— “ the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders : ” Act i. sc. 3.

and Gonzaga, in the Tempest, exclaims :

“ Who would believe that there were mountaineers,
Dewlapp’d like bulls, whose throats had hanging at them
Wallets of flesh ? or that there were such men,
Whose heads stood in their breasts.” Act iii. sc. 3.

These monsters, and many others, which had been described in the editions of Maundeville’s Travels, published by Wynkyn De Worde and Pynson in 1499—1503, etc. were revived, with fresh claims to belief, by the voyagers and natural historians of the poet’s age. In 1581, Professor Batman printed his “ Doome, warning all men to the judgmente,” in which not only the Anthropophagi, who eat man’s flesh, are mentioned, but various other races, such as the OEthiopes with four eyes, the Hippopodes, with their nether parts like horses, the Arimaspi with one eye in the forehead, etc. etc., and to these he adds “ men called Monopoli, who have no head, but a face in their breaste.” * In 1596 these marvels were corroborated by Sir Walter Raleigh’s “ Discoverie of Guiana,” † an empire, which, he affirms, was productive of a similar generation ; and Hackluyt, in 1598, tells us that, “ on that branch which is called Caora, are a nation of a people whose heades appeare not above their shoulders : they are reported to have their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouthes in the middle of their breasts.”

With the mere English scholar, classical authority was given to these tales by Philemon Holland’s Translation of Pliny’s Natural History in 1601, where are the following description both of the Anthropophagi and of the men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders : —

“ The Anthropophagi or eaters of man’s flesh whom we have placed about the North pole, tenned daies journey by land above the river Borysthenes, use to drinke out of the skulls of men’s heads, and to weare the scalpes, haire and all, in steed of mandellions or stomachers before their breasts.” ‡ “ The Blemmyi, by report, have no heads, but mouth and eies both in their breast ; ” § and again, “ beyond these westward, some there bee without heads standing upon their neckes, who carrie eies in their shoulders.” **

It is, also, very probable that the attention of Shakspeare was still further drawn to these headless monsters by the labours of the engraver ; for in Este’s edition of Maundeville’s Travels, an attempt is made to delineate one of these deformities, who is represented with the eyes, nose, and mouth situated on the breast and stomach ; and in a translation of Raleigh’s Guiana into Latin, by Hulse, in 1599, a similar plate is given. ††

That our author viewed this partiality in the public mind for wonders and

* Doome, p. 389.

† The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana, with a relation of the Great and Golden Citie of Manoa, which the Spaniards call El Dorado. Performed in 1595, by Sir W. Raleigh. Imprinted at London by Rob. Robinson, 1596.

‡ The Historie of the World. Commonly called, The Natural Historie of C. Plinius Secundus. Translated into English by Philemon Holland, Doctor in Physicke. London, printed by Adam Islip. 1601. vol. i. p. 154. book vii. chap. 2.

§ Holland’s Pliny, vol. i. p. 96. book v. chap. 8.

** Ibid. p. 156.

†† The title of this work is, “ Brevis et admiranda Descriptio Regni Guianæ, auri abundantissimi, in America.” It is accompanied by a map, engraved by Hondius, on which are drawn men hunting, with their heads beneath their shoulders.

strange spectacles, with a smile of contempt, and was willing to seize an opportunity for ridiculing the mania, appears evident from a passage in his *Tempest*, where Trinculo, discovering Caliban extended on the ground, supposes him to be a species of fish, and observes, "Where I in England now (as once I was) and had but this *fish* painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver: there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian." — Act i. sc. 2.

Wild Indians, curious fishes, and crocodiles seem to have been singularly numerous in London at this epoch, having been brought thither by several of our enterprising navigators; and by those who crowded from every part of the country to view them, many superstitious marvels were connected with their natural history. Of three or four savages which Frobisher took in his first voyage, one, we are told, "for very choler and disdain bit his tong in twaine within his mouth: notwithstanding he died not thereof, but lived untill he came in Englande, and then he died of colde, which he had taken at sea;" * the survivors, there is every reason to suppose, were exhibited; for in the year 1577, there was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company, "A description of the portrayture and shape of those strange kinde of people which the worthie Mr. Martin Fourbosier brought into England in A° 1576;" and Mr Chalmers relates, that "Lord Southampton, and Sir Francis Gorges, engaging in voyages of discovery, sent out, in 1611, two vessels under the command of Harlie, and Nicolas, who sailed along the New England coast, where they were sometimes well, and often ill, received, by the natives; and returned to England, in the same year, with five savages on board. In 1614, Captain Smith carried out to New England one of those savages, named Tantom; Captains Harlie and Hopson transported, in the same year, two others of those savages, called Epenow, and Manawet; one of those savages adventured to the European continent; and the fifth Indian, of whom no account is given, we may easily suppose died in London, and was exhibited for a show." †

We learn from a publication of Churchyard's in 1578, that Frobisher's crew found a "straunge fish dead, that had been caste from the sea on the shore, who had a boane in his head like an Unicorne, which they brought awaye and presented to our Prince, when thei came home;" ‡ and from the Stationers' Books, that, in 1604, an account was printed "of a monstrous fish, that appeared in the form of a woman from her waist upward, seene in the sea." § That the credulity of the public in Elizabeth's days was remarkably great in swallowing the most marvellous details in natural history, is proved by a curious scene in the "City Match" of Jasper Mayne, which, though first acted in 1639, refers to the age of Elizabeth, as to a period fertile in these wondrous exhibitions. A set of knaves are described as hanging out the picture of a strange fish, which they affirm is the fifth they have shown; and the following dialogue takes place relative to the inscription on the place which included the monster:—

"*Holland.* Pray, can you read that? Sir, I warrant
That tells where it was caught, and what fish 'tis.

"*Plotwell.* Within this place is to be seen,
A wonderous fish. God save—the Queen.

* Frobisher's First Voyage for the Discoverie of Cataya, 4to. 1578.

† Chalmers's Apology, p. 586.

‡ Prayse and Reporte of Maister Martyne Forboisher's Voyage to Meta Incognita, &c. bl. l. 12mo. 1578.

§ The existence of *mermaids* has, within these few years, been asserted by numerous testimonies; some of which are so clear, minute, and respectable, as to stagger the most sceptical. It is not only possible, but from the evidence alluded to it appears indeed somewhat probable, that a creature partially resembling the human form exists in the ocean, and occasionally, though rarely, approaches so near the shore as to become an object of wonder and superstitious horror. The sea round the Isle of Man was formerly reputed to abound in these monsters, which were conceived to be of two kinds, the one malignant, the other benevolent and kind.

Hol. Amen! She is my customer, and I
Have sold her bone-lace often.

Bright. Why the Queen? 'Tis writ the King.

Plot. That was to make the rhyme.

Bright. 'Slid, thou did'st read it as twere some picture of
An *Elizabeth-fish*.*

A boy is then introduced, who sings a song upon the fish, commencing with these lines :

“ We show no monstrous *crocodile*,
Nor any prodigy of Nile;”†

which again alludes to the monster-loving propensities of good Queen Bess's subjects; for Batman in his work upon Bartholome, published in 1582, says, — “ Of late years there hath been brought into England the cases or skinnies of such crocodiles, to be seene, and much money given for the sight thereof; the policy of strangers,” he adds, in the spirit of Shakspeare, “ laugh at our folly, either that we are too wealthy, or else that we know not how to bestow our money;”‡ and Bullokar, in his “ English Expositor of 1616,” confirms the charge by telling us, that a dead crocodile, “ but in perfect forme,” and nine feet long, had lately been exhibited in London, a fact to which he annexes the following tradition : — “ It is written,” he remarks, “ that he will weep over a man's head when he hath devoured the body, and then he will eat up the head too. Wherefore—crocodiles tears signifie such tears as are fained, and spent only with intent to deceive or doe harme.” Of this superstition Shakspeare has made a poetical use in two of his dramas: Margaret in Henry VI. Part 2. complains that Gloucester beguiles the king,

————— “ as the mournful crocodile
With sorrow snares relenting passengers :” Act iii. sc. 1.

and Othello, execrating the supposed duplicity of Desdemona, exclaims,

“ If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.” Act iv. sc. 2.

Many superstitions relative to the Dying existed at this time, among all ranks of people, and a few of these have been preserved by our poet. One of the most general was built on the belief, that Satan, or some of his infernal host, watched the death-bed of every individual, and, if impenitence or irreligion appeared, immediately took possession of the soul. The death-scene of Cardinal Beaufort is an admirable exemplification of this appalling idea; Henry is appealing to the Almighty in behalf of the agonised sinner, and utters the following pious petition : —

“ O thou eternal Mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
O, beat away the busy meddling fiend
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
And from his bosom purge this black despair !” Act iii. sc. 3.

The powerful delineation of this scene from the pencil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in which the “ meddling fiend” is personified in all his terrors, must be considered in strict accordance with the credulity of the age; for “ in an ancient manuscript book of devotions,” relates Mr. Douce, “ written in the reign of Henry VI., there is a prayer addressed to Saint George, with the following very singular passage: ‘ Judge for me whan the moste hedyous and damnable dragons of helle shall be redy to take my poore soule and engloute it in to theyr infernall belyes;’”§ and the books on demonology and spirits, written in the reigns of Elizabeth and

* Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 377, 378.

† Batman upon Bartholome, p. 359.

‡ Ibid. p. 379.

§ Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 20.

James, clearly prove that this relic of popish superstition was still a portion of the popular creed.

Another singular conception was, that it was necessary, in the agonies of death, to

“Pluck—men’s pillows from below their heads,”—*Timon of Athens*, act iv. sc. 3.

in order that they might die the easier; a practice founded on the ridiculous supposition that, if pigeons’ feathers formed a part of the materials of the pillow, it was impossible the sufferer should expire but in great misery, and that he would probably continue to struggle for a prodigious length of time in exquisite torture.

It was common at this period, and the practice, indeed, continued until the middle of the last century, to consider Wells and Fountains as peculiarly sacred and holy, and to visit them as a species of pilgrimage, or for the healing virtues which superstition had fondly attributed to them. Many of these wells, which had been much frequented in London, during the days of Fitzstephen, were closed or neglected, when Stowe wrote; * but in the country the habit of resorting to such springs, and for purposes similar to those which existed in papal times, was generally preserved. Bourne, who published in 1725, speaks in language peculiarly descriptive of this superstitious regard for wells and fountains, not only as it was observed in ancient times, but at the period in which he lived. In the dark ages of popery,” he says, “it was a custom, if any well had an awful situation, and was seated in some lonely melancholy vale; if its water was clear and limpid, and beautifully margin’d with the tender grass; or if it was look’d upon, as having a medicinal quality; to gift it to some Saint, and honour it with his name. Hence it is that we have at this day wells and fountains called, some St. John’s, St. Mary Magdalen’s, St. Mary’s Well, etc.

“To these kind of wells, the common people are accustomed to go, on a summer’s evening, to refresh themselves with a walk after the toil of the day, to drink the water of the fountain, and enjoy the pleasing prospect of shade and stream.

“Now this custom (though, at this time of day, very commendable, and harmless, and innocent) seems to be the remains of that superstitious practice of the Papists, of paying adoration to wells and fountains; for they imagined there was some holiness and sanctity in them, and so worshipped them.” †

It was in the north especially, where Mr. Bourne resided, that wells of this description were most frequently to be found, possessing the advantages of a romantic situation, and preserved with care through the influence of traditionary legends of the neighbouring village; for these retreats were supposed to be the haunts of fairies and good spirits who were accustomed to meet

————— “in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook.” ‡

At these wells offerings were frequently made, either owing to the conceived sanctity of the place, or from gratitude for imagined benefit received through the waters of the spring; and as those who had recourse to these fountains were usually of the lower class, small pieces of money were given, or even rags sus-

* Stowe’s Survey of London, p. 18. edit. of 1618.

† Bourne’s Antiquities apud Brand, p. 90.

‡ A fountain of this hallowed and mysterious nature, has been described by Mr. Southey in language most graphically and beautifully descriptive:—

“There is a fountain in the forest call’d
The fountain of the Fairies: when a child,
With most delightful wonder I have heard
Tales of the Elfin tribe that on its banks
Hold midnight revelry. An ancient oak,
The goodliest of the forest, grows beside;
Alone it stands, upon a green grass plat,
By the woods bounded like some little isle.
It ever hath been deem’d their favourite tree,
They love to lie and rock upon its leaves,
And bask them in the moon-shine. Many a time

Hath the woodman shown his boy where the dark round
On the green-sward beneath its boughs, bewrays
Their nightly dance, and bade him spare the tree.
Fancy had cast a spell upon the place
And made it holy; and the villagers
Would say that never evil thing approached
Unpunished there. The strange and fearful pleasure
That fill’d me by that solitary spring,
Ceas’d not in riper years; and now it woke
Deeper delight, and more mysterious awe.”

Joan of Arc, vol. i. b. i. p. 126.

pended on the trees or bushes which overhung the stream; whence these fountains in many places obtained the name of Rag-wells. One thus termed is mentioned by Mr. Brand, as still exhibiting these tributary shreds at the village of Benton near Newcastle; Mr. Pennant records two at Spey and Drachaldy in Scotland; and Mr. Shaw tells us, that in the province of Moray pilgrimages to wells are not yet obsolete.* In many places in the North, indeed, there are wells still remaining which were manifestly intended for the refreshment of the way-worn traveller, and are yet held in veneration. We have seen some of these with ladles of brass affixed to the stone-work by a chain, a convenience probably as ancient as the Anglo-Saxon era.

Several traditions of a peculiarly superstitious hue, have been cherished in this country with regard to the bird-tribe, and most of them have been introduced by our great poet as accessory either to the terrible or the pathetic. The ominous croaking of the raven and the crow have been already mentioned, and we shall therefore, under the present head, merely advert to a few additional notices relative to the owl and the ruddock, the former the supposed herald of horror and disaster, the latter the romantic minister of charity and pity.

To the fearful bodings of the clamorous owl, which we have already introduced when treating of omens, may now be added a superstition which formerly rendered this unlucky bird the peculiar dread of mothers and nurses. It was firmly believed, that the screech-owl was in the habit of destroying infants by sucking out their blood and breath as they laid in the cradle. "Lamiæ," observes Lavaterus, "are things that make children afayde. Lamiæ are also called Striges. Striges (as they say) are unluckie-birds, whiche sucke out the blood of infants lying in their cradles. And hereof some men will have witches take their name, who also are called † Volaticæ." This credulity relative to the Strix or screech-owl may be traced to Ovid, ‡ and is alluded to by Shakspeare in the following lines:—

"We talk of goblins, owls, and elvish sprites;
If we obey them not, this will ensue,
They'll suck our breath, and pinch us black and blue."

Comedy of Errors, act ii. sc. 2.

Another strange legend in the history of the owl is put into the mouth of the hapless Ophelia:—

"Well, God 'ield you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter;"—*Hamlet*, act iv. sc. 5.

a metamorphosis of which Mr. Douce has given us the origin; he tells us that it is yet a common story among the vulgar in Gloucestershire, and is thus related:—"Our Saviour went into a baker's shop where they were baking, and asked for some bread to eat. The mistress of the shop immediately put a piece of dough into the oven to bake for him; but was reprimanded by her daughter, who insisting that the piece of dough was too large, reduced it to a very small size. The dough, however, immediately afterwards began to swell, and presently became of a most enormous size. Whereupon the baker's daughter cried out 'Heugh, heugh, heugh,' which owl-like noise probably induced our Saviour for her wickedness to transform her into that bird." He adds that this story was often related to children, in order to deter them from such illiberal behaviour to poor people.

The partiality shown to the ruddock or red-breast seems to have been founded on the popular ballad of "The Children in the Wood," and the play of *Cymbeline*. The charitable office, however, which these productions have ascribed to Robin, has an earlier origin than their date; for in Thomas Johnson's "*Cornucopia*," 4to, 1596, it is related that "the robin redbreast, if he find a man or woman dead, will cover all his face with mosse, and some thinke that if the body should re-

* Bourne's Antiquities apud Brand, p. 94, 95.

† Fast. lib. vi.

‡ Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, p. 6.

maine unburied that he would cover the whole body also." It is highly probable that this anecdote might give birth to the burial of the babes, whom no one heeded,

" Till robin red-breast painfully
Did cover them with leaves ;"

for, according to Dr. Percy,* this pathetic narrative was built upon a play published by Rob. Yarrington in 1601. It is likewise possible that the same passage occasioned the beautiful lines in the play of *Cymbeline*, performed about 1606, where Arviragus, mourning over Imogen, exclaims—

—————" With fairest flowers,
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave : Thou shalt not lack
The flower, that's like thy face, pale primrose ; nor
The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins ; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath : the ruddock would,
With charitable bill—bring thee all this ;
Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,
To winter-ground thy corse." Act iv. sc. 2.

These interesting pictures of the red-breast would alone be sufficient to create an affectionate feeling for him ; the attachment however has been ever since kept alive by delineations of a similar kind. In our author's time, Drayton, Webster, and Dekker, have all alluded to this pleasing tradition : the first in his "*Owl*, 1604"—

" Cov'ring with moss the deads unclosed eye,
The little red-breast teacheth charitie ;" †

the second in his Tragedy, called "*The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona*." 1612—

" Call for the robin red-breast and the wren,
Since o'er shady groves they hover,
And with leaves and flowers do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men ;" ‡

and the third in one of his pamphlets printed in 1616—" They that cheere up a prisoner but with their sight, are robin red-breasts that bring strawes in their bills to cover a dead man in extremitie." §

Some wonderful properties relative to an imaginary gem, called a carbuncle, formed likewise a part of the popular creed. It was supposed to be the most transparent of all the precious stones, and to possess a native intrinsic lustre so powerful as to illuminate the atmosphere to a considerable distance around it. It was, therefore, very appositely adopted by the writers of romance, as an ornament and source of light for their subterranean palaces, and almost all our elder poets have gifted it with a similar brilliancy ; thus Chaucer, in his "*Romaunt of the Rose* ;" ** Gower, in his "*Confessio Amantis* ;" †† Lydgate, in his "*Description of King Priam's Palace* ;" ‡‡ and Stephen Hawes, in his "*Pastime of Pleasure*," §§ have all celebrated it as a kind of second sun, and the most valuable of earthly products. Chaucer, more particularly, mentions it as so clear and bright,—

" That al so sone as it was night,
Den mightin sene to go for nede
A mile, or two in length and brede,
Such light ysprange out of that stone."

* Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 171. 4to. edit.

† Chalmers's English Poets, vol. iv. p. 408.

‡ Ancient British Drama, vol. iii. p. 41.

§ Villanies discovered by lanthorn and candle-light, chap. xv.—For some modern tributes to the supposed charity of this domestic little bird, I refer my readers to the first volume of *Literary Hours*, 3d. edit. p. 65. et seq.

** Chalmers's English Poets, vol. i. p. 179.

†† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 177.

‡‡ Description of King Priam's Palace, lib. ii.

§§ Vide Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 229.

That this fiction was credited in the days of Elizabeth and James, may be conceded, not only from the familiar allusions of the poets, but from the philosophic writers on the superstitions of the age. To the unborrowed light of the carbuncle, Shakspeare has referred in King Henry the Eighth, where the Princess Elizabeth is prophetically termed,

————— “ a gem
To lighten all this isle ;” Act ii. sc. 3.

and in Titus Andronicus (if that play can be deemed his), upon the discovery of Bassianus slaughtered in a pit;

“ *Martius.* Upon his bloody finger he doth wear
A precious ring, that lightens all the hole,
—— like a taper in some monument ;” Act ii. sc. 4.

He also mentions this “rich jewel” by way of comparison in Coriolanus; * appropriates it as an ornament to the wheels of Phœbus’s chariot in Cymbeline; † and in the Player’s speech in Hamlet, the eyes of Pyrrhus are said to be “like carbuncles.” ‡

Drayton describes this fabled stone with nearly as much precision as Chaucer; he calls it

“ ——— that admired, mighty stone,
The carbuncle that’s named ;
Which from it such a flaming light
And radiancy ejecteth,
That in the very darkest night
The eye to it directeth.” §

A modern poet, remarkable for his powers of imagination, has beautifully and very happily availed himself of these marvellous attributes, in describing the magnificent palace of Shedad, a passage which we shall transcribe, as it leads to an illustrative extract from a writer of Shakspeare’s age :

“ Here self-suspended hangs in air,
As its pure substance loathed material touch,
The living carbuncle ;
Sun of the lofty dome,
Darkness has no dominion o’er its beams ;
Intense it glows, an ever-flowing tide
Of glory, like the day-flood in its source.”

“ I have no where seen,” says Mr. Southey in a note on these lines, “ so circumstantial an account of its (the carbuncle’s) wonderful properties as in a passage of Thuanus, quoted by Stephanus in his notes to Saxo-Grammaticus.

“ Whilst the King was at Bologna, a stone, wonderful in its species and nature, was brought to him from the East Indies, by a man unknown, who appeared by his manners to be a Barbarian. It sparkled as though all burning, with an incredible splendour; flashing radiance, and shooting on every side its beams, it filled the surrounding air to a great distance with a light scarcely by any eyes endurable. In this also it was wonderful, that being most impatient of the earth, if it was confined, it would force its way, and immediately fly aloft; neither could it be contained by any art of man in a narrow place, but appeared only to love those of ample extent. It was of the utmost purity, stained by no soil or spot. Certain shape it had none, for its figure was inconstant, and momentarily changing, and though at a distance it was wonderful to the eye, it would not suffer itself to be handled with impunity, but hurt those who obstinately struggled with it, as many persons before many spectators experienced. If by chance any part of it was broken off, for it was not very hard, it became nothing less.” **

An account equally minute, and in terms nearly similar, occurs in Scot’s “Discoverie of Witchcraft,” 1584, and both were probably taken from the same source, the writings of Fernel or Fernelius. This physician died in 1558; and his de-

* Act i. sc. 4.

§ Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. iv. p. 465.

† Act. v. sc. 5.

** Thalaba the Destroyer, vol. i. p. 39—41. edit. 1801.

‡ Act ii. sc. 2.

scription, as copied by Scot, contributed, no doubt, to prolong the public credulity in this kingdom; though the English philosopher attempts to explain the phenomenon by supposing that actual flame was concentrated and burning in the centre of the gem.

“Johannes Fernelius writeth of a strange stone latelie brought out of India, which hath in it such a marvellous brightness, puritie, and shining, that therewith the aire round about is so lightened and cleared, that one may see to read thereby in the darkness of night. It will not be contained in a close roome, but requireth an open and free place. It would not willingly rest or staie here belowe on the earth, but alwaies laboureth to ascend up into the aire. If one presse it downe with his hand, it resisteth, and striveth verie sharplie. It is so beautiful to behold, without either spot or blemish, and yet verie unpleasant to taste or feelee. If any part thereof be taken awaie, it is never a whit diminished, the forme thereof being inconstant, and at everie moment mutable.” *

The carbuncle was believed to be an animal substance generated in the body of a serpent, to possess a sexual distinction, the males having a star-formed burning nucleus, while the females dispersed their brilliancy on all sides in a formless blaze; and, like other transparent gems, to have the power of expelling evil spirits.

While on the subject of superstitious notions relative to luminous bodies, we may remark, that in the age of Shakspeare, the wandering lights, termed Will-o-wisp and Jack-o-lantern, were supposed by the common people to be occasioned by demons and malignant fairies, with the view of leading the benighted traveller to his destruction.

“Many tymes,” says Lavaterus, “candles and small fiers appeare in the night, and seeme to run up and downe;—those fiers some time seeme to come togither, and by and by to be severed and run abroade, and at the last to vanish clean away. Sometime these fiers go alone in the night season, and put such as see them, as they travel by night, in great fear. But these things, and many such lyke, have their natural causes: and yet I will not denye, but that many tymes Dyvels delude men in this manner.” †

Stephano, in the Tempest, attributes this phenomenon to the agency of a mischievous fairy; “Monster, your fairy, which, you say, is a harmless fairy, has done little better than played the Jack with us.”—Act. iv. sc. 1.

Various causes have been assigned for the appearance of the *ignis fatuus*; modern chemistry asserts it to be occasioned by hydrogen gas, evolving from decaying vegetables, and the decomposition of pyritic coal; and when seen hovering on the surface of burial grounds, to originate from the same gas in a higher state of volatility, through the agency of phosphoric impregnation.

The partial view which we have now taken of the superstitions of the country, as they existed in the age of Shakspeare, will, in part, demonstrate how great was the credulity subsisting at this period; how well calculated were many of these popular delusions for the purposes of the dramatic writer, and how copiously and skilfully have these been moulded and employed by the great poet of our stage. A considerable portion also of the manners, customs, and diversions of the country, which had been necessarily omitted in the preceding chapters, will be found included in this sketch of a part of the popular creed, and will contribute to heighten the effect of a picture, which can only receive its completion through the mutual aid of various subsequent departments of the present work.

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 306.

† Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, p. 51.

CHAPTER X.

Biography of Shakspeare resumed—His Irregularities—Deer-stealing in Sir Thomas Lucy's Park—Account of the Lucy family—Daisy-hill, the keeper's Lodge, where Shakspeare was confined, on the Charge of stealing Deer—Shakspeare's Revenge—Ballad on Lucy—Severe Prosecution by Sir Thomas—never forgotten by Shakspeare—this Cause, and probably also Debt, as his Father was now in reduced Circumstances, induced him to leave the Country for London about 1586—Remarks on this Removal.

AFTER the slight sketch of rural life which we have just given ; of its manners, customs, diversions, and superstitions, as they existed during the latter part of the sixteenth century, we shall now proceed with the biographical narrative of our author, resuming it from the close of the fourth chapter.

To regulate the workings of an ardent imagination, and to control the effervescence of the passions in early life, experience has uniformly taught us to consider as a task of great difficulty ; and seldom, indeed, capable of being achieved without the advice and direction of those, who, under the guidance of similar admonition, have successfully borne up against the numerous temptations to which human frailty is subjected. That Shakspeare possessed powers of fancy greatly beyond the common lot of humanity, and that with these is almost constantly connected a correspondent fervency of temperament and passion, will not probably be denied ; and if it be recollected that the poet became the arbitrator of his own conduct at the early age of eighteen, not much wonder will be excited, although he was a married man, and a father, if we have to record some juvenile irregularities. Tradition affirms, and the report has been repeated by Mr. Rowe, that he had the misfortune, shortly after his settlement in Stratford, to form an intimacy with some young men of thoughtless and dissipated character, who, among other illegalities, had been in the habit of deer-stealing, and by whom, more than once, he was induced, under the idea of a frolic, to join in their reprehensible practice.

The scene of depredation when Shakspeare and his companions were detected, was Fulbroke Park, at that time belonging to Sir Thomas Lucy, knight. This gentleman, who has obtained celebrity principally, if not solely, as the prosecutor of Shakspeare, was descended from a family, whose pedigree has been deduced, by Dugdale, from the reign of Richard the First ; the name of Lucy, however, was not assumed by his ancestors until the thirty-fourth of Henry the Third. Sir Thomas, in the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, built a noble mansion at Charlcott, near Stratford, but on the opposite side of the Avon ; this edifice, which still exists, is constructed of brick with stone coins, and though somewhat modernized, still preserves, as a whole, its ancient Gothic character, especially the grand front, which exhibits pretty accurately its pristine state. Fuller has recorded Sir Thomas as sheriff for the county of Warwickshire in the tenth year of Elizabeth, and informs us, that his armorial bearings were Gul. Crusulee Or, 3 Picks (or Lucies) Hau-riant Ar.*

That the rich woods, sequestered lawns, and romantic recesses of Fulbroke Park, would very frequently attract the footsteps of our youthful bard, independent of any lure which the capture of its game might afford, we may justly surmise ; and still more confidently may we affirm, that his meditations or

* Fuller's Worthies, part iii. p. 132. The Luce or Pike is very abundant in this part of the Avon, and here may still be seen in the kitchen of Charlcott-house, the representation of a pike, weighing forty pounds, native of this stream, and caught in the year 1640.

diversions in this forest laid the foundation of a part of the beautiful scenery which occurs in *As You Like it*. The woodland pictures in this delightful play are faithful transcripts of what he had felt and seen in those secluded haunts, particularly the description of the wounded deer, the pathos and accuracy of which are no doubt referrible to the actual contemplation of such an incident, in the shades of Fulbroke; they strikingly prove, indeed, that the habits of the chase, though fostered in the morn of youth, had not, even in respect to the objects of their sport, in the smallest degree impaired the native tenderness and humanity of the poet. The expressions of pity, in fact, for the sufferings of a persecuted animal were never uttered in words more impressive than what the ensuing dialogue exhibits:

“ *Duke*. Come, shall we go and kill us venison?
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fools,—
Being native burghers of this desert city,—
Should, in their own confines, with forked heads
Have their round haunches gor’d.

Lord. Indeed, my lord,
The melancholy Jaques grieves at that;
And, in that kind, swears you do more usurp
Than doth your brother that hath banish’d you.
To-day, my lord of Amiens, and myself,
Did steal behind him, as he lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out

Upon the brook that brawls along this wood:
To the which place a poor sequester’d stag,
That from the hunter’s aim had ta’en a hurt,
Did come to languish; and, indeed, my lord,
The wretched animal heav’d forth such groans,
That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
Almost to bursting; and the big round tears
Cours’d one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase: and thus the hairy fool,
Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears.” Act i. sc. 2.

The detection of Shakspeare in his adventurous amusement, was followed, it is said, by confinement for a short time in the keeper’s lodge, until the charge had been substantiated against him. A farm-house in the park, situated on a spot called Daisy Hill, is still pointed out as the very building which sheltered the delinquent on this unfortunate occasion.*

That Sir Thomas had reason to complain of this violation of his property, and was warranted in taking proper steps to prevent its recurrence, who will deny? and yet it appears from tradition, that a reprimand and public exposure of his conduct constituted all the punishment that was at first inflicted on the offender. Here the matter would have rested, had not the irritable feelings of our young bard, inflamed by the disgrace which he had suffered, induced him to attempt a retaliation on the magistrate. He had recourse to his talents for satire, and the ballad which he produced for this purpose was probably his earliest effort as a writer.

Of this pasquinade, which the poet took care should be affixed to Sir Thomas’s park-gates, and extensively circulated through his neighbourhood, three stanzas have been brought forward as genuine fragments. The preservation of the whole would certainly have been a most entertaining curiosity; but even the authenticity of what is said to have been preserved, becomes a subject of interest, when we recollect, that the fate and fortunes of our author hinged upon the consequences of this juvenile production.

The first of these fragments, which is the opening stanza, rests upon testimony of considerable weight and respectability; upon the authority of a Mr. Thomas Jones, who was born about 1613 and resided at Tarbick, a village in Worcestershire, eighteen miles from Stratford, where he died, aged upwards of ninety, in 1703. He is considered by Mr. Malone, as the grandson of a Mr. Thomas Jones, who dwelt in Stratford during the period that Shakspeare was an inhabitant of it, and who had four sons between the years 1581 and 1590, one of whom, settling at Tarbick, became the father of the preserver of the fragment. This venerable old man could remember having heard from several very aged people at Stratford the whole history of the poet’s transgression, and could repeat the first stanza of the ballad which he had written in ridicule of Sir Thomas. A friend

of his to whom he was one day repeating this stanza, which was the whole that he could recollect, had the precaution to take a copy of it from his recitation, and the grandson of the person thus favoured, a Mr. Wilkes, presented a transcript of it to Mr. Oldys and Mr. Capell. Among the collections for a "Life of Shakspeare" left by the former of these gentlemen, this stanza was found, "faithfully transcribed," says its possessor, "from the copy which his (Mr. Jones's) relation very courteously communicated to me;" and of Mr. Oldys's veracity it is important to add, that Mr. Steevens considered it as unimpeachable, remarking, at the same time, that "it is not very probable that a ballad should be forged, from which an undiscovered wag could derive no triumph over antiquarian credulity." It must be confessed that neither the wit nor the poetry of these lines, which we are about to communicate, deserve much praise, and that the greater part of the point, if it can be termed such, depends upon provincial pronunciation; for in a note on the copy which Mr. Capell possessed, it is said, that "the people of those parts pronounce lowsie like Lucy:" but let us listen to the commencement of this once important libel:—

" A parlamente member, a justice of peace,
At home a poor scare-crow, at London an asse,
If lowsie is Lucy, as some volke miscalle it,
Then Lucy is lowsie whatever befall it:
He thinks himself greate,
Yet an asse in his state
We allowe by his ears but with asses to mate.
If Lucy is lowsie, as some volke miscalle it,
Sing lowsie Lucy, whatever befall it."

Upon the next fragment of this composition, including two stanzas, an equal degree of confidence cannot be reposed; for it occurs in a manuscript History of the Stage, written between the years 1727 and 1730, in which many falsehoods have been detected; but still the internal evidence is such as to render its genuineness far from improbable. The narrative of its acquisition informs us that "the learned Mr. Joshua Barnes, late Greek Professor of the University of Cambridge, baiting about forty years ago at an inn in Stratford, and hearing an old woman singing part of the above said song, such was his respect for Mr. Shakspeare's genius, that he gave her a new gown for the two following stanzas in it; and could she have said it all, he would (as he often said in company, when any discourse has casually arose about him) have given her ten guineas:

" Sir Thomas was too covetous
To covet so much *deer*,
When horns enough upon his head,
Most plainly did appear.
Had not his Worship one *deer* left?
What then? He had a wife
Took pains enough to find him horns
Should last him during life."

The quibble upon the word *deer* in these lines strongly tends to authenticate them as a genuine production of our bard; for he has in more places than one of his dramas amused himself with a similar jingle: thus in the First Part of Henry the Sixth, allowing this play to have issued from his pen, Talbot, encouraging his forces, exclaims

" Sell every man his life as *dear* as mine,
And they shall find *dear deer* of us, my friends;"—Act iv. sc. 2.

and again in the First Part of King Henry the Fourth, the Prince, lamenting over Falstaff, says

" Death hath not struck so fat a *deer* to-day,
Though many *dearer*, in this bloody fray." Act v. sc. 4.

Mr. Whiter, who first applied these corroborating passages to the subject before us, adds, "With respect to the verses in question, I cannot but observe that however suspicious their external evidence may appear, they contain within themselves some very striking features of authenticity; and may, I think, be readily conceived to have proceeded from the pen of our young Bard, before he was removed from the little circle of his native place, when his powers, unformed and unpractised, were roused only by resentment to a Country Justice, and destined merely to delight the rustic companions of his deer-stealing adventure.—As an additional evidence to the quibble on the word deer, which appears to be intended in these verses, we may observe that there is no topic, to which our author so delights to allude, as the Horns of the Cuckold.—Let me be permitted to remark in general, that the anecdotes, which have been delivered down to us respecting our poet, appear to me neither improbable, nor, when duly examined, inconsistent with each other: even those, which seem least allied to probability, contain in my opinion the *adumbrata*, if not *expressa signa veritatis*." *

Whatever might be the merits of this ballad as a poetical composition, its effect as a satire was severely felt; nor can we greatly blame the conduct of Sir Thomas Lucy, if we consider, on the one hand, the lenity which was at first shown to the young offender, and, on the other, the publicity which was industriously given to this provoking libel; for it is recorded by Mr. Jones of Tarbick, that it was the placarding of this piece of sarcasm "which exasperated the knight to apply to a lawyer at Warwick to proceed against him." More magnanimity, it must be confessed, would have been displayed by altogether neglecting this splenetic retaliation; but still the provocation was sufficiently bitter to excite the resentment of a man who might not be entitled to the appellations so liberally bestowed on Sir Thomas by one of the poet's commentators of "vain, weak, and vindictive." The protection of property and character, provided the means resorted to for security be proportioned to the offence, can neither be deemed foolish nor oppressive, and that the bounds of moderation were exceeded in this instance, we have no sufficient grounds for asserting. Of the character of the magistrate nothing certain has transpired; but if we may be allowed to form an opinion of his temper and abilities, from the only trait which can be considered as indicative, we must pronounce them to have been neither despicable nor unamiable. In the church at Charlcott there are still remaining several monuments of the Lucy family, among which is one to the memory of Sir Thomas and his lady; the effigies of the knight affords a very pleasing idea of his countenance, but is unaccompanied by date or inscription; over his wife, however, who reposes by his side, at the age of sixty-three, is a very striking encomium written by himself, the conclusion of which is attested in the following emphatic terms; after much apparently sincere eulogy, he adds, that she was, "when all is spoken that can be said, a woman so furnished and garnished with vertue as not to be bettered, and hardly to be equalled by any. As she lived most vertuously, so she dyed most godly. Set down by him that best did know what hath been written to be true. THOMAS LUCY."

This may very justly be considered, we think, as a proof, not only of the conjugal happiness of our knight, but of his possession of an intellect far from contemptible; yet is it very possible that resentment, even in a mind of still superior order, should for a time excite undue warmth and animosity, especially under the lash of satire; and we are the more willing to believe this to have been the case in the present instance, both from the known benevolence of the poet's character, and from the pertinacity with which he continued to remember the injury; for it is generally agreed that the opening scene of the Merry Wives of Windsor is intended to ridicule Sir Thomas, under the character of Justice Shallow. Now the representation of this comedy in its new modelled and enlarged

* Whiter's Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare, p. 94, 95.

state, certainly did not take place until after the accession of King James, and as the prosecutor of our bard died on the 18th of August, 1600, it is not probable that the resentment of the poet would have survived the death of Sir Thomas, had not the severity of the magistrate been originally pushed too far.

This dialogue also between Shallow, Slender, and Sir Hugh Evans, serves strongly to confirm the authenticity of the commencing stanza of the ballad; for the Welsh parson plays upon the word *luce* in the same manner as that fragment has done upon the surname *Lucy*. Justice Shallow, it should likewise be remembered, is complaining of Falstaff for beating his men, killing his deer, and breaking open his lodge, and he threatens that "if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire," to which Slender adds,—

"In the county of Gloster, justice of peace, and coram.

Shal. Ay, cousin Slender, and *Cust-alorum*.

Slen. Ay, and *ratolorum* too, and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself *armigero*; in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, *armigero*.

Shal. Ay, that we do; and have done any time these three hundred years.

Slen. All his successors, gone before him, have done't; and all his ancestors, that come after him, may: they may give the dozen white luses in their coat.

Shal. It is an old coat.

Evans. The dozen white *louses* do become an old coat well; it agrees well, passant: it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies—love.

Shal. The *luce* is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old coat.

Slen. I may quarter, coz?

Shal. You may, by marrying.

Evans. It is marring, indeed, if he quarter it.

Shal. Not a whit.

Evans. Yes, py'r-lady; if he has a quarter of your coat, there is but three skirts for yourself, in my simple conjectures; but this is all one: if Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements unto you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence, to make atonements and compromises between you.

Shal. The Council shall hear it; it is a riot."

Act i. sc. 1.

Though the portrait thus given of Sir Thomas Lucy (in the person of Shallow) represent him as weak and vain, yet we must recollect that it is still drawn in the spirit of retaliation and satire, and was most undoubtedly meant for a caricature.

It appears then more than probable, indeed from the testimony of Mr. Jones it appears to be the fact, that the prosecution, which, there is little doubt, had been threatened on the detection of the trespass, was only carried into execution in consequence of the poetical assault on the part of our author, who, possibly, thought nothing serious could occur from such a mode of revenge.

The circumstances, therefore, of the prosecution being threatened in the first instance, and taking place in the second, might occasion the report which Mr. Rowe has inserted in his *Life of Shakspeare*, where, speaking of the ballad as his first essay in poetry, he adds, "it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London."

That Shakspeare left Stratford for London, about the year 1586 or 1587, and that the prosecution commenced by Sir Thomas Lucy contributed to this change of situation, are events which we may with safety admit; but that the libel was the sole cause of the removal appears not very probable; and we are inclined to believe with Mr. Chalmers, that debt added wings to his flight. "While other boys," remarks this ingenious controversialist, "are only snivelling at school, and thinking nothing of life, Shakspeare entered the world, with little but his love to make him happy, and little but his genius to prevent the intrusion of misery. An increasing family, and pressing wants, obliged him to look beyond the limits of Stratford, for subsistence, and for fame. He felt, doubtless, emotions of genius, and he saw, certainly, persons, who had not better pretensions than his own, rising to eminence in a higher scene. By these motives was he probably induced

to remove to London, in the period, between the years 1585 and 1588; chased from his home, by the terriers of the law, for debt, rather than for deer-stealing, or for libelling."

The probability of this having been the case, will be much heightened, when we recollect, that between the years 1579 and 1586 the father of Shakspeare had fallen into distressed circumstances; that during the first of these periods, he had been excused paying a weekly contribution of 4*d.*, and that during the latter he was under the necessity of resigning his office as alderman, not being able to defray the expense of attendance at the common halls; facts, which while they ascertain his impoverished state, at the same time prove his utter inability to assist his son, now burdened with a family, and anxiously looking round for the means of its support.

For the adoption of the year 1586 or 1587, as the era of our author's emigration to town, several powerful, and almost convincing, arguments may be given, and these it will be necessary here to state.

It is well ascertained that Shakspeare married in the year 1582, and Mr. Rowe has affirmed that "in this kind of settlement he continued for some time, till an extravagance (the deer-stealing frolic) that he was guilty of, forced him both out of his country, and that way of living which he had taken up." Now that this settlement for some time was the period which elapsed between the years 1582 and 1586, will almost certainly appear, when we recollect the domestic events which occurred during its progress; that, according to tradition, he had embraced his father's business, on entering into the marriage-state; and that the family of the poet in short was increased in this interval, by the birth of three children, baptized at Stratford; Susanna, May 26th, 1583, and Hamnet and Judith, Feb. 2d, 1584-5.

That the removal was not likely to have taken place later than 1587, will be generally admitted, when we advert to the commencement of his literary labours. The issue of research has rendered it highly probable that our bard was a corrector and improver of old plays for the stage in 1589; it has discovered from evidence amounting almost to certainty, that he was a writer for the theatre on a plan of greater originality in 1591, and that, even so early as 1592, he was noticed as a dramatic poet of some celebrity. Now, if we compare these facts, which will be noticed more fully hereafter, with the poet's own assertion, that the *Venus and Adonis* was "the first heir of his invention,"* it will go far to prove, that this poem, which is not a short one, and is elaborated with great care, must have been composed between his departure from Stratford, and his commencement as a writer for the stage, (that is between the years 1586 and 1589); for while there is no ground to surmise that it was written on the banks of the Avon, there is sufficient evidence to assert that it was finished, though not published, before he was known to fame.

It is impossible to contemplate the flight of Shakspeare from his family and native town, without pausing to reflect upon the consequences which followed that event; consequences most singularly propitious, not only to the intellectual character of his country in particular, but to the excitation and progress of genius throughout the world. Had not poverty and prosecution united in driving Shakspeare from his humble occupation in Wawickshire, how many matchless lessons of wisdom and morality, how many unparalleled displays of wit and imagination, of pathos and sublimity, had been buried in oblivion; pictures of emotion, of character, of passion, more profound than mere philosophy had ever conceived, more impressive than poetry had ever yet embodied; strains which shall now sound through distant posterity with increasing energy and interest, and which shall powerfully and beneficially continue to influence and to mould both national and individual feeling.

* Vide Dedication of the Poem to the Earl of Southampton.

PART II.

SHAKSPEARE IN LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

Shakspeare's Arrival in London about the Year 1586, when twenty-two Years of Age—Leaves his Family at Stratford, visiting them occasionally—His Introduction to the Stage—His Merits as an Actor.

No era in the annals of Literary History ever perhaps occurred of greater importance, than that which witnessed the entrance of Shakspeare into the metropolis of his native country; a position which will readily be granted, if we consider the total revolution which this event produced in the Literature of the Stage, and the vast influence which, through the medium of the most popular branch of our poetry, it has subsequently exerted on the minds, manners, and taste of our countrymen. Friendless, persecuted, poor, about the early age of twenty-two, was the greatest poet which the world has ever seen, compelled to desert his home, his wife, his children, to seek employment from the hands of strangers. Rich, however, in talent, beyond all the sons of men, blessed with a cheerful disposition, an active mind, and a heart conscious of integrity, soon did the clouds which overspread his youth break away, and unveil a character which has ever since been the delight, the pride, the boast of England.

We have assigned some strong reasons, at the close of the last chapter, for placing the epoch of Shakspeare's arrival in London, about 1586 or 1587; and we shall now bring forward some presumptive proofs that he not only left his wife and family at Stratford on his first visit to the capital, but that his native town continued to be their settled residence during his life.

Mr. Rowe has affirmed upon a tradition which we have no claim to dispute, that he "was obliged to leave his family for some time;" a fact in the highest degree probable from the causes which led to his removal; for it is not to be supposed, situated as he then was, that he would be willing to render his wife and children the companions and partakers of the disasters and disappointments which it was probable he had to encounter. Tradition further says, as preserved in the manuscripts of Aubrey, that "he was wont to go to his native country once a year;" and Mr. Oldys, in his collections for a life of our author, repeats this report with an additional circumstance, remarking "if tradition may be trusted, Shakspeare often baited at the Crown Inn or Tavern in Oxford, in his journey's to and from London." * It is true that these traditions, if insulated from other circumstances, might merely prove that he visited the place of his birth annually, without necessarily inferring that his family was also resident there; but if we consult the parish-register of Stratford, their testimony will indeed be strong, and powerfully confirm the deduction; for it appears on that record that, merely including his children, there is a succession of baptisms, marriages and deaths in his family at Stratford, from the year 1583 to 1616. This evidence, so satisfactory in itself,

* Antony Wood, it appears, was the original author of this anecdote, for he tells us in his *Athenæ*, that John Davenant, who kept the Crown, was "an admirer and lover of plays and play-makers, especially Shakspeare, who frequented his house in his journies between Warwickshire and London." *Ath. Oxon.* vol. ii. p. 292.

will be strengthened when we recollect that the poet in his mortgage, dated the 10th of March, 1612-13, is described as William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, gentleman; and that by his contemporaries he was frequently styled the "Sweet Swan of Avon," designations which, when combined with the testimony already adduced, must be considered as implying the family-residence of the poet.*

It was this concatenation of circumstances which induced Mr. Chalmers, than whom a more indefatigable enquirer with regard to our author has not existed, to conclude that Shakspeare had no "fixed residence in the metropolis," nor "ever considered London as his home;" but had "resolved that his wife and family should remain through life," at Stratford, "though he himself made frequent excursions to London, the scene of his profit, and the theatre of his fame;" adding, in a note, that the evidence from the parish-register of Stratford had compelled even scepticism to admit his position to be very probable.

While discussing this subject in his first Apology, he has introduced a novel and most curious fact, for the purpose of guarding the reader against an apparently opposing, but too hasty inference. "If documents," he observes, "be produced to prove, that one Shakspeare, a player, resided in St. Saviour's parish, Southwark, at the end of the sixteenth, or the beginning of the seventeenth, century, this evidence will not be conclusive proof of the settled residence of Shakspeare: for, it is a fact, as new as it is curious, that his brother Edmond, who was baptized on the 3d of May, 1580, became a player at the Globe; lived in St. Saviour's; and was buried in the church of that parish: the entry in the register being without a blur; '1607 December 31 was buried), Edmond Shakspeare, a player, in the church;' there can be no dispute about the date, or the name, or the profession. It is remarkable, that the parish-clerk, who scarcely ever mentions any other distinction of the deceased, than a man, or a woman, should, by I know not what inspiration, have recorded Edmond Shakspeare, as a player. There were, consequently, two Shakspeares on the stage, during the same period; as there were two Burbages, who were also brothers, and who acted on the same theatre."

Upon the whole, we may with considerable confidence and safety conclude, that the family-residence of Shakspeare was always at Stratford; that he himself originally went alone to London, and that he spent the greater part of every year there alone, annually, however, and probably for some months, returning to the bosom of his family, and that this alternation continued until he finally left the capital.

Having disposed of this question, another, even still more doubtful, immediately follows, with regard to the employment and mode of life which the poet was compelled to adopt on reaching the metropolis. Mr. Rowe, recording the consequences of the prosecution in Warwickshire, observes,—"It is at this time, and upon this accident, that he is said to have made his first acquaintance in the play-house. He was received into the company then in being, at first in a very mean rank."

From this passage we may in the first place infer, that Shakspeare, immediately on his arrival in town, applied to the theatre for support; an expedient to which there is reason to suppose he was induced, by a previous connection or acquaintance with one or more of the performers. It appears, indeed, from the researches of Mr. Malone, that the probability of his being known, even while at Stratford, to Heminge, Burbage, and Thomas Greene, all of them celebrated comedians of their day, is very considerable. "I suspect," remarks this acute commentator, "that both he (namely, John Heminge) and Burbage were Shakspeare's countrymen, and that Heminge was born at Shottery, a village in Warwickshire, at a

* Ben Jonson, in his Poem to the Memory of Shakspeare, calls him "Sweet Swan of Avon;" and Joseph Taylor, who represented the part of Hamlet in 1596, in the dedication which he and his fellow-players wrote for Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, in 1647, speaks of "the flowing compositions of the then expired *Sweet Swan of Avon*, Shakspeare."

very small distance from Stratford-upon-Avon; where Shakspeare found his wife. I find two families of this name settled in that town early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth, the daughter of John Heminge of Shottery, was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon, March 12, 1567. This John might have been the father of the actor, though I have found no entry relative to his baptism: for he was probably born before the year 1558, when the Register commenced. In the village of Shottery also lived Richard Hemyng, who had a son christened by the name of John, March 7, 1570. Of the Burbage family the only notice I have found is an entry in the Register of the parish of Stratford, October 12, 1565, on which day Philip Green was married in that town to Ursula Burbage, who might have been sister to James Burbage, the father of the actor, whose marriage I suppose to have taken place about that time. If this conjecture be well founded, our poet, we see, had an easy introduction to the theatre."

The same remark which concludes this paragraph is repeated by the commentator when speaking of Thomas Greene, whom he terms, a celebrated comedian, the townsman of Shakspeare, and perhaps his relation. The celebrity of Greene as an actor is fully ascertained by an address to the reader, prefixed by Thomas Heywood to his edition of John Cook's Greene's "Tu Quoque; or, The City Gallant;" "as for Maister Greene," says Heywood, "all that I will speak of him (and that without flattery) is this (if I were worthy to censure), there was not an actor of his nature, in his time, of better ability in performance of what he undertook, more applauded by the audience, of greater grace at the court, or of more general love in the city;" * but the townsmanship and affinity rest only on the inference to be drawn from an entry in the parish-register of Stratford, and from some lines quoted by Chetwood from the comedy of the "Two Maids of Moreclack," which represent Greene speaking in the character of a clown, and declaring

"I prattled poesie in my nurse's arms,
And, born, where late our Swan of Avon sung,
In Avon's streams we both of us have lav'd,
And both came out together."†

As these lines are not, however, in the play from which they are pretended to have been taken; as they appear to be a parody on a passage in Milton's *Lycidas*, and as Chetwood has been detected in falsifying and forging many of his dates, little credit can be attached to their evidence, and we must solely depend upon the import of the register, which records that "Thomas Greene, alias Shakspeare, was buried there, March 6th, 1589." If this Thomas were the father of the actor, and the probability of this being the case cannot be denied, and may even have led to the attempted imposition of Chetwood, the affinity as well as the townsmanship, will be established.

It seems, therefore, neither rash nor inconsequent to believe, in failure of more direct evidence, that the channel through which Shakspeare, immediately on his arrival in town, procured an introduction to the stage, was first opened by his relationship to Greene, who possessing, as we have seen, great merit and influence as an actor, could easily insure him a connection at the theatre, and would naturally recommend him to his countryman Heminge, who was then about thirty years of age, and had already acquired considerable reputation as a performer.‡

Mr. Rowe's second assertion that he was received into the company, then in being, at first in a very mean rank, has given rise to some reports relative to the nature of his early employment at the theatre, which are equally inconsistent and degrading. It has been related that his first office was that of Call-boy, or at-

* Ancient British Drama, vol. ii. p. 539.

† British Theatre, p. 9.

‡ Mr. Chalmers, speaking of Heminges says—"There is reason to believe, that he was, originally, a *Warwickshire lad*; a shire, which has produced so many players and poets; the Burbages, the Shakspeares, the Greens, and the Harts." Apology, p. 435, 436.

tendant on the prompter, and that his business was to give notice to the performers when their different entries on the stage were required. Another tradition, which places him in a still meaner occupation, is said to have been transmitted through the medium of Sir William Davenant to Mr. Betterton, who communicated it to Mr. Rowe, and this gentleman to Mr. Pope, by whom, according to Dr. Johnson, it was related in the following terms:—

“ In the time of Elizabeth, coaches being yet uncommon, and hired coaches not at all in use, those who were too proud, too tender, or too idle to walk, went on horseback to any distant business or diversion. Many came on horseback to the play, and when Shakspeare fled to London from the terror of a criminal prosecution, his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse, and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready again after the performance. In this office he became so conspicuous for his care and readiness, that in a short time every man as he alighted called for Will. Shakspeare, and scarcely any other waiter was trusted with a horse while Will. Shakspeare could be had. This was the first dawn of better fortune. Shakspeare, finding more horses put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his inspection, who, when Will. Shakspeare was summoned, were immediately to present themselves, *I am Shakspeare's boy, Sir.* In time, Shakspeare found higher employment: but as long as the practice of riding to the playhouse continued, the waiters that held the horses retained the appellation of *Shakspeare's boys.*”

Of this curious anecdote it should not be forgotten, that it made its first appearance in Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*;* and that if it were known to Mr. Rowe, it is evident he thought it so little entitled to credit that he chose not to risk its insertion in his life of the poet. In short, if we reflect for a moment that Shakspeare, though he fled from Stratford to avoid the severity of a prosecution, could not be destitute either of money or friends, as the necessity for that flight was occasioned by an imprudent ebullition of wit, and not by any serious delinquency; that the father of his wife was a yeoman both of respectability and property; that his own parent, though impoverished, was still in business; and that he had, in all likelihood, a ready admission to the stage through the influence of persons of leading weight in its concerns; we cannot, without doing the utmost violence to probability, conceive that, under these circumstances, and in the twenty-third year of his age, he would submit to the degrading employment of either a horse-holder at the door of a theatre, or of a call-boy within its walls.

Setting aside, therefore, these idle tales, we may reasonably conclude that by the phrase “a very mean rank,” Mr. Rowe meant to imply, that his first engagement as an actor was in the performance of characters of the lowest class. That his fellow-comedians were ushered into the dramatic world in a similar way, and rose to higher occupancy by gradation, the history of the stage will sufficiently prove: Richard Burbage, for instance, who began his career nearly at the same time with our author, and who subsequently became the greatest tragedian of his age, had, in the year 1589, appeared in no character more important than that of a Messenger. If this were the case with a performer of such acknowledged merit, we may readily acquiesce in the supposition that the parts first given to Shakspeare were equally as insignificant; and as readily allow that an actor thus circumstanced might very properly be said to have been admitted into the company at first in a very mean rank.

As Shakspeare's immediate employment, therefore, on his arrival in town, appears to have been that of an actor, it cannot be deemed irrelevant if we should here enquire into his merits and success in this department.

Two traditions, of a contradictory complexion, have reached us relative to Shakspeare's powers as an actor; one on the authority of Mr. Aubrey, and the other on that of Mr. Rowe. In the manuscript papers of the first of these gentlemen, we are told that our author, “being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, and was an actor at one of the play-houses, and did act

* *Lives of the Poets*, vol. i. p. 130.

exceedingly well;" but, in the life of the poet by the second, it is added, after mentioning his admission to the theatre in an inferior rank, that "his admirable wit, and the natural turn of it to the stage, soon distinguished him, if not as an extraordinary actor, yet as an excellent writer. His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other players, before some old plays, but without any particular account of what sort of parts he used to play; and though I have enquired, I could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet."

Of descriptions thus opposed, a preference only can be given as founded on other evidence; and it happens that subsequent enquiry has enabled us to consider Mr. Aubrey's account as approximating nearest to the truth.

Contemporary authority, it is evident, would decide the question, and happily the researches of Mr. Malone have furnished us with a testimony of this kind. In the year 1592, Henry Chettle, a dramatic writer, published a posthumous work of Robert Greene's, under the title of "Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance," in which the author speaks harshly of Marlowe, and still more so of Shakspeare, who was then rising into fame. Both these poets were justly offended, and Chettle, who was of course implicated in their displeasure, printed, in the December of the same year, a pamphlet, entitled "Kind Harts Dreame," to which is prefixed an address "to the Gentlemen Readers," apologizing, in the following terms, for the offence which he had given:

"About three months since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry book-sellers' hands, among others his "*Groatsworth of Wit*," in which a letter written to divers play-makers is offensively by one or two of them taken; and because on the dead they cannot be re-avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a living author: and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy but it must light on me. How I have, all the time of my conversing in printing, hindered the bitter inveighing against schollers, it hath been very well known; and how in that I dealt, I can sufficiently prove. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them ('Marlowe') I care not if I never be. The other ('Shakspeare'), whom at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as I have moderated the hate of living writers, and might have used my own discretion, (especially in such a case, the author being dead), that I did not, I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault; because mysele have seene his demeanour no less civil than he EXCELLENT IN THE QUALITIE HE PROFESSESS. *Besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honestie, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art.* For the first, whose learning I reverence, and at the perusing of Greene's book, strooke out what then in conscience I thought he in some displeasure writ; or had it been true, yet to publish it was intollerable; him I would wish to use me no worse than I deserve."

This curious passage clearly evinces that our author was deemed excellent as an actor (for the phrase "the qualitie he professes" peculiarly denoted at that time the profession of a player), in the year 1592, only five or six years, at most, after he had entered on the stage; and consequently that the information which Aubrey had received was correct, while that obtained by Rowe must be considered as unfounded.

So well instructed, indeed, was Shakspeare in the duties and qualities of an actor, that it appears from Downes's book, entitled "*Roscius Anglicanus*," that he undertook to teach and perfect John Lowin in the character of King Henry the Eighth, and Joseph Taylor in that of Hamlet.

Of his competency for this task, several parts of his dramatic works might be brought forward as sufficient proof. Independent of his celebrated instructions to the player in Hamlet, which would alone ascertain his intimate knowledge of the histrionic art, his conception of the powers necessary to form the accomplished tragedian, may be drawn from part of a dialogue which occurs between Richard the Third and Buckingham:—

"*Glo.* Come, cousin, can'st thou quake and change thy colour?
Murther thy breath in middle of a word?"

*And then again begin, and stop again,
As if thou wert distraught, and mad with terror?*
Buck. Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian;
Speak, and look big, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion: ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles."

Act. iii. sc. 5.

It would be highly interesting to be able to point out what were the characters which Shakspeare performed, either in his own plays, or in those of other writers; but the information which we have on this subject is, unfortunately, very scanty. Mr. Rowe has mentioned, as the sole result of his enquiries, that the Ghost in Hamlet was his chef-d'œuvre. That this part, however, in the opinion of the poet, required some skill and management in the execution, is evident from the expressions attributed to Hamlet, who exclaims, on the appearance of the royal spectre, during the interview between himself and his mother,—

————— "Look you how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me,
Lest with this piteous action, you convert
My stern effects;"

Act. iii. sc. 4.

a description, which, there is reason to suppose, the author would not have ventured to introduce, unless he had been conscious of the possession of powers capable of doing justice to his own delineation.

Another tradition, preserved by Mr. Oldys, and communicated to him, as Mr. Malone thinks, by Mr. Thomas Jones of Tarbick, in Worcestershire, whom we have formerly mentioned, imports, as corrected by the commentator just mentioned, that a relation of the poet's, then in advanced age, but who in his youth had been in the habit of visiting London for the purpose of seeing him act in some of his own plays, told Mr. Jones, that he had a faint recollection "of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping and unable to walk, that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company, who were eating, and one of them sung a song." That this part was the character of Adam, in *As You Like It*, there can be no doubt, and if we add, that, from the arrangement of the names of the actors and of the persons of the drama, prefixed to Ben Jonson's play of "Every Man in his Humour," first acted in 1598, there is reason to imagine that he performed the part of Old Knowell in that comedy, we may be warranted probably in drawing the conclusion, that the representation of aged characters was peculiarly his forte.

It appears, also, from the first four lines of a small poem, written by John Davies, about the year 1611, and inscribed, "To our English Terence, Mr. William Shakspeare," that our bard had been accustomed to perform kingly parts;

"Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
Hadst thou not play'd some *kingly parts* in sport,
Thou hadst been a companion for a king,
And been a king among the meaner sort;"*

a passage which leads us to infer, that several of the regal characters in his own plays, perhaps the parts of King Henry the Eighth, King Henry the Sixth, and King Henry the Fourth, may have been appropriated to him, as adapted to the general estimate of his powers in acting.

From the notices thus collected, it will be perceived, that Shakspeare attempted not the performance of characters of the first rank; but that in the representation of those of a second-rate order, to which he modestly confined his exertions, he

* The Scourge of Folly, by John Davies of Hereford, no date.

was deemed excellent. We have just grounds also for concluding that of the theory of acting in its very highest departments, he was a complete master; and though not competent to carry his own precepts into perfect execution, he was a consummate judge of the attainments and deficiencies of his fellow-comedians, and was accordingly employed to instruct them in his own conception of the parts which they were destined to perform.

It may be considered, indeed, as a most fortunate circumstance for the lovers of dramatic poetry, that our author, in point of execution, did not attain to the loftiest summit of his profession. He would, in that case, it is very probable, have either sate down content with the high reputation accruing to him from this source, or would have found little time for the labours of composition, and consequently we should have been in a great degree, if not altogether, deprived of what now constitute the noblest efforts of human genius.

CHAPTER II.

Shakspeare commences a Writer of Poetry, probably about the year 1587, by the composition of his *Venus and Adonis*—Historical Outline of Polite Literature, during the Age of Shakspeare.

As the first object of Shakspeare must necessarily have been, from the confined nature of his circumstances, to procure employment, it is highly reasonable to conclude that he at first contented himself with the diligent discharge of those duties which fell to his share as an actor of inferior rank. That these, however, were calculated to absorb, for any length of time, a mind so active, ample, and creative, cannot for a moment be credited; and, indeed, we are warranted, by every fair inference, to assert, that, no sooner did he consider his situation at the theatre of Blackfriars as tolerably secured, than he immediately directed his powers to the cultivation of his favourite art—that of poetry.

Of his inclination to this elegant branch of literature, we have an early proof, in the mode of retaliation which he adopted, in consequence of his prosecution by Sir Thomas Lucy; and that the *Venus and Adonis*, “the first heir of his invention,” as he terms it, was commenced, not long subsequent to this period, and shortly after his arrival in town, a little enquiry will induce us to consider as an almost established fact.

It has, indeed, been surmised, by a very intelligent critic, that this poem may have been written while its author “felt the powerful incentive of love,” and consequently “before he had sallied from Stratford;” “certainly,” he adds, “before he was known to fame.” The first suggestion we may dismiss as a mere supposition; the second must be acknowledged as founded on truth.

All the commentators agree in fixing on the year 1591, as the latest period for our author’s commencement as a dramatic poet: for this obvious reason, that both Greene and Chettle have mentioned him as a writer of plays in 1592, and in such a manner, likewise, as proves that he was even then possessed of some degree of notoriety, the latter mentioning his “facetious grace in writing,” and the former after calling him “an upstart crow beautified with our feathers,” and parodying a line from the Third Part of King Henry VI., concludes by telling us, that he “is in his own conceit the only SHAKE-SCENE in the country;” circumstances which have naturally induced the most sagacious critics on our bard to infer, that, thus early to have excited so much envy as this railing accusation evinces, he must without doubt have been a corrector and improver of plays anterior to 1590, and very probably in 1589.

Now, though the first edition of the *Venus and Adonis* was not published until 1593, yet the author's positive declaration, that it was "the first heir of his invention," necessarily implies that its composition had taken place prior to any poetical attempts for the stage; and as we have seen, that his arrival in town could not have occurred before 1586; that he was then immediately employed as an actor in a very inferior rank; and that his earliest efforts as a dramatic poet may be attributed to the year 1589 or 1590, it will follow, as a legitimate deduction, if we allow the space of a twelvemonth for his settlement at the theatre, that the composition of this poem, "the first heir of his invention," must be given to the interval elapsing between the years 1587 and 1590, a period not too extended, the nature of his other engagements being considered, for the completion of a poem very nearly amounting to twelve hundred lines.

Having thus conducted Shakspeare to his entrance on the career of authorship and fame, it will now be necessary, in conformity with our plan, to take a general and cursory survey of Literature, as it existed in the reigns of Elizabeth and James. The remainder of this chapter will therefore be devoted to a broad outline on this subject, reserving, however, the topics of Romance and Miscellaneous Poetry, for distinct and immediately subsequent consideration, as these will form an apposite prelude to an estimate of the patronage which our author enjoyed, to a critique on his poems, and to critical notices of contemporary miscellaneous poets, enquiries which, while they embrace, in one view, the merits of Shakspeare as a miscellaneous poet, are, at the same time, in their preliminary and collateral branches, in some degree preparatory to his introduction as a dramatic writer; preparatory also to a sketch of the manners, customs, and diversions of the metropolis, during his age, and to a discussion of his transcendent powers as the bard of fancy and of nature.

The literary period of which we are proceeding to give a slight sketch, may be justly considered as the most splendid in our annals; for in what equal portion of our history can we bring forward three such mighty names as Spenser, Bacon, and Shakspeare, each, in their respective departments, remaining without a rival. As the field, however, is so ample that even to do justice to an outline will require much attention to arrangement, it will be necessary to distribute what we have to offer, in this stage of our work, under the heads of Bibliography, Philology, Criticism, History, General, Local, and Personal, and Miscellaneous Literature; premising that as we confine ourselves, in the strictest sense, to elegant literature, or what has been termed the *Belles Lettres*, science, theology, and politics will, of course, be excluded.

Literature, which had for some centuries been confined to ecclesiastics and scholars by profession, was, at the commencement of Elizabeth's reign, thrown open to the higher classes of general society. The example was given by the Queen herself; and the nobility, the superior orders of the gentry, and even their wives and daughters, became enthusiasts in the cause of letters. The novelty which attended these studies, the eager desire to possess what had been so long studiously and jealously concealed, and the curiosity to explore and rifle the treasures of the Greek and Roman world, which mystery and imagination has swelled into the marvellous, contributed to excite an absolute passion for study and for books. The court, the ducal castle, and the baronial hall were suddenly converted into academies, and could boast of splendid libraries, as well as of splendid tapestries. In the first of these, according to Ascham, might be seen the Queen reading "more Greeke every day, than some prebendarie of this church doth read Latin in a whole week," and while she was translating Isocrates on Seneca, it may be easily conceived that her maids of honour found it convenient to praise and to adopt the disposition of her time. In the second, observes Warton, the daughter of a duchess was taught not only to distil strong waters, but to construe Greek; and in the third, every young lady who aspired to be fashionable was compelled, in imitation of the greater world, to exhibit similar marks of erudition.

If such were the studious manners of the ladies, it will readily be credited, that an equal, if not a greater attachment to literature existed in the other sex; in short, an intimacy with Greek, Latin, and Italian was deemed essential to the character of the nobleman and the courtier; and learning was thus rendered a passport to promotion and rank. That this is not an exaggerated statement, but founded on contemporary authority, will be evident from a passage in Harrison's *Description of England*, where, after delineating the court, he adds,—“This further is not to be omitted, to the singular commendation of both sorts and sexes of our courtiers here in England, that there are verie few of them, which have not the use and skill of sundrie speaches, beside an excellent veine of writing before time not regarded.—Trulie it is a rare thing with us now, to heare of a courtier which hath but his owne language. And to saie how many gentlewomen and ladies there are, that beside sound knowledge of the Greeke and Latine toongs, are thereto no lesse skilfull in the Spanish, Italian, and French, or in some one of them, it resteth not in me: sith I am persuaded, that as the noblemen and gentlemen do surmount in this behalfe, so these come verie little or nothing at all behind them for their parts, which industrie God continue, and accomplish that which otherwise is wanting!” Again, a few lines below, he remarks of the ladies of the court, that some of them employ themselves “in continuall reading either of the holie scriptures, or histories of our owne or forren nations about us, and diverse in writing volumes of their owne, or translating of other mens into our English and Latine toongs;” * employments which now appear to us very extraordinary as the daily occupations of a court, but were, then, the natural result of that ardent love of letters, which had somewhat suddenly been diffused through the higher classes.

Were we, however, to conclude, that the same erudite taste pervaded the bulk of the people, or even the middle orders of society, we should be grossly mistaken. Literature, though cultivated with enthusiasm in the metropolis, was confined even there to persons of high rank, or to those who were subservient to their education and amusement. In the country, to read and write were still esteemed rare accomplishments, and among the rural gentry of not the first degree, little difference, in point of literary information, was perceptible between the master and his menial attendant. Of this several of the plays of Shakspeare and Jonson will afford evidence, especially the comedies of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Every Man in his Humour*, to which a striking proof may be added from Burton, who wrote just at the close of the Shakspearian period; and, in treating of study, as a cause of melancholy, says,

“I may not deny, but that we have a sprinkling of our Gentry, here, and there, one, excellently well learned;—but they are but few in respect of the multitude, the major part (and some again excepted, that are indifferent) are wholly bent for Hawks and Hounds, and carried away many times with intemperate lust, gaming and drinking. If they read a book at any time, 'tis an English Chronicle, Sir Huon of Bordeaux, Amadis de Gaule, &c., a play-book, or some pamphlet of News, and that at seasons only, when they cannot stir abroad, to drive away time; their sole discourse is dogs, hawks, horses, and what News? If some one have been a traveller in Italy, or as far as the Emperour's Court, wintered in Orleance, and can court his mistress in broken French, wear his clothes neatly in the newest fashion, sing some choice out-landish tunes, discourse of lords, ladies, towns, palaces, and cities, he is compleat and to be admired: otherwise he and they are much at one; no difference betwixt the master and the man, but worshipful titles: wink and choose betwixt him that sits down (clothes excepted) and him that holds the trencher behind him.” †

It is to the court, therefore, and its attendants, to the nobility, higher gentry, and their preceptors, that we are to look for that ardent love of books and learning which so remarkably distinguished the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and which was destined, in another century, to descend into, and illuminate the larger

* Holinshed's *Chronicles*, edit. 1807, vol. i. p. 330.

† Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, fol. edit. p. 84.

masses of our population. Nothing, indeed, can more forcibly paint Elizabeth's passion for books and learning, than a passage in Harrison's unadorned but faithful description of her court:—

“ Finallie,” says that interesting pourtrayer of ancient manners, “ to avoid idlenesse, and prevent sundrie transgressions, otherwise likelie to be committed and doone, such order is taken, that everie office hath either a bible, or a booke of the acts and monuments of the church of England, or both, beside some histories and chronicles lieing therein, for the exercise of such as come into the same: whereby the stranger that entereth into the court of England upon the sudden, shall rather imagine himselfe to come into some publike schoole of the universities, where manie gave eare to one that readeth, than into a princes palace, if you conferre the same with those of other nations. Would to God all honourable personages would take the example of hir graces godlie dealing in this behalfe, and shew their conformitie unto these hir so good beginnings! which if they would, then should manie grievous offences (wherewith God is highlie displeased) be cut off and restrained, which now doo reigne exceedinglie, in most noble and gentlemen's houses, whereof they see no patterne within hir graces gates.” *

Well might Mr. Dibdin apostrophize this learned Queen in the following picturesque and characteristic terms:—

“ All hail to the sovereign, who, bred up in severe habits of reading and meditation, loved books and scholars to the very bottom of her heart! I consider Elizabeth as a royal bibliomaniac of transcendant fame!—I see her, in imagination, wearing her favourite little *Volume of Prayers*,† the composition of Queen Catharine Parr, and Lady Tirwit, ‘ bound in solid gold, and hanging by a gold chain at her side,’ at her morning and evening devotions—afterwards, as she became firmly seated upon her throne, taking an interest in the embellishments of the *Prayer Book*,‡ which goes under her own name; and then indulging her strong bibliomaniacal appetites in fostering the institution for the erecting of a Library, and an Academy for the study of Antiquities and History.” §

The example of Elizabeth, whose taste for books had been fostered under the tuition of Ascham, was speedily followed by some of the first characters in the kingdom; but by none with more ardent zeal than by Archbishop Parker, who was such an indefatigable admirer and collector of curious and precious books, and of every thing that appertained to them, that, according to Strype, he kept constantly in his house “ drawers of pictures, wood-cutters, painters, limners, writers, and book-binders,—one of these was Lylie, an excellent writer, that could counterfeit any antique writing. Him the archbishop customarily used to make old books compleat.” ** No expense, in short, was spared, by this amiable and accomplished divine, in procuring the most rare and valuable articles; his library was daily increased through the medium of numerous agents, whom he employed, both at home and abroad, and among these was Batman, the author of the “ Doome” and the commentator “ upon Bartholome,” who, we are told, purchased for him not less than 6700 books “ in the space of no more than four years.” ††

To Parker succeeded the still more celebrated names of Sir Robert Cotton and

* Holinshed's Chronicles, vol. i. p. 331.

† “ The reader is referred to an account of a precious bound diminutive godly book (once belonging to Q. Elizabeth), in the first volume of my edition of the British ‘ Typographical Antiquities,’ p. 83.; for which, I understand, the present owner asks the sum of 150*l*. We find that in the 16th year of Elizabeth's reign, she was in possession of ‘ One Gospell booke, covered with tissue and garnished on th' inside with the crucifix and the Queene's badges of silver guilt, poiz with wodge, leaves and all, cxij oz.’ Archæologia, vol. xiii. p. 221.

“ I am in possession of the covers of a book, bound (A. D. 1569) in thick parchment or vellum, which has the whole length portrait of Luther on one side, and of Calvin on the other. These portraits, which are executed with uncommon spirit and accuracy, are encircled with a profusion of ornamental borders of the most exquisite taste and richness.” Bibliomania, p. 158.

‡ “ In the Prayer Book which goes by the name of Queen Elizabeth's, there is a portrait of Her Majesty kneeling upon a superb cushion with elevated hands, in prayer. This book was first printed in 1575; and is decorated with wood-cut borders of considerable spirit and beauty; representing, among other things, some of the subjects of Holbein's Dance of Death.”

§ Dibdin's Bibliomania, 2d edit. 1811, p. 329—331. This book, the most fascinating which has ever been written on Bibliography, is already scarce. It is composed in the highest tone of enthusiasm for the art, and its dialogue and descriptions are given with a mellowness, a warmth and raciness, which absolutely fix and enchant the reader.

** Strype's Life of Parker, p. 415, 529.

†† Ibid. p. 528.

Sir Thomas Bodley, men to whom the nation is indebted for two of the most extensive and valuable of its public libraries. The enthusiasm which animated these illustrious characters in their bibliographical researches is almost incredible, and what gives an imperishable interest to their biography is, that their morals were as pure as their literary zeal was glowing.

Sir Thomas Bodley was singularly fortunate in the selection of Dr. Thomas James for the keeper of his library, whom Camden terms “*vir eruditus, et vere, φιλόβιβλος*,” and of whom Fuller says, that “on serious consideration one will conclude the Library made for him, and him for it, like tallies, they so fitted one another. Some men live like mothes in libraries, not being better for the books, but the books the worse for them, which they only soile with their fingers. Not so Dr. James, who made use of books for his own and the publique good. He knew the age of a manuscript, by looking upon the face thereof, and by the form of the character could conclude the time wherein it was written.” *

Among the lovers and collectors of curious books, during the reign of Elizabeth, may be mentioned Dr. John Dee, notorious for his magical and astrological lore, and who, according to his own account, possessed a library of “four thousand volumes, printed and unprinted, bound and unbound, valued at 2000*l.*,” beside numerous boxes and cases of very rare evidences Irish and Welsh; and Captain Cox of Coventry, whose boudoir of romances and ballads we shall have occasion to notice, at some length, in the succeeding chapter.

It is remarkable that the two sovereigns included in the era of Shakspeare, should have felt an equally unbounded inclination to study and to books. So attached was James to bibliothecal delights, that when he visited the Bodleian Library in 1605, he is said by Burton to have exclaimed on his departure, “if it were so that I must be a prisoner, if I might have my wish, I would desire to have no other prison than this library, and to be chained together with so many good authors.” Burton himself was one of the most inveterate bibliomaniacs of his day; Hearne tell us that he was a collector of “ancient popular little pieces,” which, together with a multitude of books of the best kind, he gave to the Bodleian Library. In the preface to his curious folio, he speaks of his eyes aking with reading, and his fingers with turning the leaves;† and in the body of his work, under the article of study, he expatiates, in the highest strain of enthusiasm, on the luxury of possessing numerous books:

“We have thousands of authors of all sorts,” he observes; “many great libraries full well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates: and he is a very block that is affected with none of them.—I could even live and dye with—and take more delight, true content of mind in them, than thou hast in all thy wealth and sport, how rich soever thou art.—Nicholas Gerbelius, that good old man, was so much ravished with a few Greek authors restored to light, with hope and desire of enjoying the rest, that he exclaims forthwith, *Arabibus atque Indis omnibus erimus ditiores*, We shall be richer than all the Arabic or Indian Princes; of such esteem they were with him, in comparable worth and value.”—He then adopts the emphatic language of *Heinsius*: “I no sooner come into the Library, but I bolt the door to me, excluding lust, ambition, avarice, and all such vices, whose nurse is Idleness, their mother Ignorance, and Melancholy herself, and in the very lap of eternity, amongst so many divine souls, I take my seat, with so lofty a spirit and sweet content, that I pity all our great ones, and rich men that know not this happiness. I am not ignorant in the mean time,” he adds, “notwithstanding this which I have said, how barbarously and basely for the most part our ruder Gentry esteem of libraries and books, how they neglect and contemn so great a treasure, so inestimable a benefit.—For my part I pity these men,—how much on the other side, are all we bound that are scholars, to those munificent Ptolemies, bountiful Mæcenates, heroical patrons, divine spirits,—*qui nobis hæc otia fecerunt*, *Namque erit ille mihi semper Deus*—that have provided for us so many well furnished libraries as well in our publick Academies in most cities, as in our private Colledges? How shall I remember Sir Thomas Bodley, amongst the rest. Otho Nicholson, and the right reverend John Williams Lord Bishop of Lincolne, (with many other pious acts) who besides that at St. John’s

* Fuller’s Worthies, part ii. p. 13.

† Anatomy of Melancholy, Democritus to the Reader, p. 5.

College in Cambridge, that in Westminster, is now likewise in *Fieri* with a Library at Lincolne (a noble precedent for all corporate towns and cities to imitate) *O quam te memorem (vir illustrissime) quibus elogiis ?*" *

The passion for letters and for books, which was thus diffused among the higher classes, necessarily occasioned much attention to be paid to the preservation and decoration of libraries, the volumes of which, however, were not arranged on the shelves in the manner that we are now accustomed to see them. The leaves, and not the back, were placed in front, in order to exhibit the silk strings or golden clasps which united the sides of the cover. Thus Bishop Earl, describing the character of a young gentleman of the University, says,—“His study has commonly handsome shelves, his books neat silk strings, which he shews to his father's man, and is loth to unty or take down for fear of misplacing.”

To the most costly of these embellishments, the golden clasps, Shakspeare has referred, both in a metaphorical and literal sense. In the Twelfth Night the Duke, addressing the supposed Cesario, exclaims—

————— “ I have *unclasp'd*
To thee the *book* even of my secret soul ;” Act. i. sc. 4.

and in Romeo and Juliet, Lady Capulet observes,

“ That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,
That in *gold clasps* locks in the golden story.” Act. i. sc. 3.

It appears, indeed, that the art of ornamenting the exterior of books was carried, at this period, to a lavish extent, jewels, as well as gold, being employed to enhance their splendour. Let us listen to the directions of the judicious Peacham, on this head, a contemporary authority, who has thought it not unnecessary to subjoin the best mode of keeping books, and the best site for a library.

“ Have a care,” says he, “ of keeping your bookes handsome, and well bound, not casting away over much in their gilding or stringing for ostentation sake, like the prayer-bookes of girles and gallants, which are carried to Church but for their out-sides. Yet for your owne use spare them not for noting or interlining (if they be printed), for it is not likely you mean to be a gainer by them, when you have done with them : neither suffer them through negligence to mold and be moath-eaten, or want their strings or covers.—Suffer them not to lye neglected, who must make you regarded ; and goe in torn coates, who must apparrell your mind with the ornaments of knowledge, above the robes and riches of the most magnificent Princes.

“ To avoyde the inconvenience of moaths and moldinesse, let your study be placed, and your windows open if it may be, towards the East, for where it looketh South or West, the aire being ever subject to moisture, moathes are bred and darkishnesse encreased, whereby your maps and pictures will quickly become pale, losing their life and colours, or rotting upon their cloath, or paper, decay past all helpe and recovery.” †

The interior, also, as well as the exterior, of books, had acquired a high degree of richness and finishing during the era of which we are treating. The black-letter, Roman, and Italic types were in general clear, sharp, and strong, and though the splendid art of illumination had ceased to be practised in the sixteenth century, in consequence of the establishment of printing, the loss was compensated for, by more correct ornamental capital initials, cut with great taste and spirit on wood and copper, and by engraved borders and title-pages. Portraits were also frequently introduced in the initials, especially by the celebrated printers Jugge and Day, the latter of whom, patronised by Archbishop Parker, became in his turn the patron of Fox the martyrologist, in the first edition of whose book, 1563, and in Day's edition of Dee's “ General and Rare Memorials pertayning to the perfecte Arte of Navigation,” folio, 1577, may be found an admirable specimen of this style of decoration, the capital initial C including a portrait of Elizabeth

* Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 176, 177.

† The Compleat Gentleman. 2d ed. p. 54.

sitting in state, and attended by three of her ministers. * A similar mode of costly ornamenture issued from the presses of Grafton, Witchurch, Bill, and Barker, and perhaps in no period of *our* annals has this species of decorative typography been carried to a higher state of perfection. Some very grotesque ornaments, it is true, and some degree of affectation were occasionally exhibited in title-pages, and to one of the latter class, very common in this age, Shakspeare alludes in the Second Part of King Henry IV., where Northumberland, describing the approach of a messenger, says,

—— “ This man’s brow, like to a title-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume ; ”

imagery drawn from the custom of printing elegiac poems with the title-page, and every intermediate leaf, entirely black ; but, upon the whole, valuable books, and especially the Bible, had more splendid and minutely ornamental finishing bestowed upon their pages, than has since occurred, in this country, until towards the close of the eighteenth century.

It had been fortunate, if accuracy in typography had kept pace with the taste for decoration ; but this, with few exceptions, may be said never to have been the case, and about the termination of Elizabeth’s reign, the era of total incorrectness, as Mr. Steevens remarks, commenced, when “ works of all kinds appeared with the disadvantage of more than their natural and inherent imperfections ; ” an assertion sufficiently borne out by the state in which the dramatic poetry of this period was published. It may be added that the Black-letter continued to be the prevailing type during the days of Elizabeth, but seems to have nearly deserted the English press before the demise of her successor.

Of what extent was the Library of Shakspeare, and of what its chief treasures consisted, can now only be the subject of conjecture. That he was a lover and collector of books more particularly within the pale of his own language, and in the range of elegant literature, is sufficiently evidenced by his own works. A “ *Bibliotheca Shakspeariana* ” may, in fact, be drawn, from the industry of his commentators, who have sought for, and quoted, almost every book to which he has been directly or remotely indebted. The disquisitions indeed into which we are about to enter will pretty accurately point out the species of books which principally ornamented his shelves, and may preclude any other remark here, than that the chief wealth of his collection consisted of Historic, Romantic, and Poetic Literature, in all their various branches.

Philological or grammatical literature, as applied to the English language, appears to have made little progress until after the middle of the sixteenth century. We are told by Roger Ascham in 1544, the period of the publication of his *Toxophilus*, that “ as for the Latine or Greeke tongue, everye thinge is so excellentlye done in them, that none can do better ; in the Englishe tongue, contrary, everye thinge in a manner so meanlye both for the matter and handelinge, that no man can do worse. For therein the least learned, for the most part, have been alwayes most readye to write.” The *Toxophilus* of this useful and engaging writer, was written in his native tongue, with the view of presenting the public with a specimen of a purer and more correct English style than that to which they had hitherto been accustomed ; and with the hope of calling the attention of the learned from the exclusive study of the Greek and Latin, to the cultivation of their vernacular language. The result which he contemplated was attained, and, from the period of this publication, the shackles of Latinity were broken, and composition in English prose became an object of eager and successful attention.

Previous to the exertions of Ascham, very few writers can be mentioned as affording any model for English style. If we except the Translation of Froissart by Bouchier, Lord Berners, in 1523, and the History of Richard III. by Sir Thomas More, certainly compositions of great merit, we shall find it difficult to produce an

* Dibdin’s *Typographical Antiquities*, p. 35.

author of much value for his vernacular prose. On the contrary, very soon after the appearance of the *Toxophilus*, we find harmony and beauty in English style emphatically praised and enjoined. Thus in the “*Arte of Rhethorike for the use of all suche as are studious of Eloquence, sette forth in Englishe by Thomas Wilson*,” 1553, fol. 85, 86, we are informed that many now aspired to write English elegantly.

“When we have learned,” remarks this critic, “usuall and accustomed wordes to set forth our meanyng, we ought to joyne them together in apte order, that the eare maie delite in hearynge the harmonie. I knowe some Englishemen, that in this point have suche a gift in the Englishe as fewe in Latin have the like; and therefore delite the Wise and Learned so muche with their pleasaunte composition, that many rejoyce when they maie heare suche, and thinke muche learning is gotte when they maie talke with them.” The *Treatise* of Wilson powerfully assisted the cause which Ascham had been advocating; it displays much sagacity and good sense, and greatly contributed to clear the language from the affectation consequent on the introduction of foreign words and idiom. The licentiousness, in this respect, was carried, indeed, at this time, to such a height, that those who affected more than ordinary refinement, either in conversation or writing, so Italianated or Latinized their English, as to be scarcely intelligible to the common people. Wilson severely satirizes this absurd practice. “Some,” says he, “seke so farre for outlandishe Englishe, that they forget altogether their mother’s language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were alive, they were not able to tel what they saie: and yet these fine Englishe clerkes wil saie they speake in their mother tongue, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the kinges Englishe.—He that cometh lately out of Fraunce, will talke Frenche Englishe, and never blushe at the matter. Another choppes in with Englishe Italianated, and applieth the Italian phraise to our Englishe speakyng.—The unlearned or folishe phantasticall, that smelles but of learning (suche fellows as have seene learned men in their daies) will so Latin their tongues, that the simple cannot but wonder at their talke, and thinke surely they speake by some revelacion. I know them, that thinke Rhetorike to stande wholie upon darke wordes; and he that can catche an ynkehorne terme by the taile, hym they compt to be a fine Englishman and a good rhetorician.” He then adds a specimen of this style from a letter “devised by a Lincolneshire man for a voide benefice,” addressed to the Lord Chancellor:—“Pondering, expending, and revoluting with myself, your ingent affabilitie, and ingenious capacitie, for mundane affaires, I cannot but celebrate and extoll your magnificall dexteritie above all other. For how could you have adapted suche illustrate prerogative, and dominiall superioritie, if the fecunditie of your ingenie had not been so fertile and wonderfull prenaunt, &c.” That the same species of pedantry continued to prevail in 1589, we have the testimony of Puttenham, who, in his chapter “Of Language,” observes that “we finde in our English writers many wordes and speeches amenable, and ye shall see in some many inkhorne termes so ill affected brought in by men of learning as preachers and schoolemasters: and many straunge termes of other languages by Secretaries and Merchants and travailours, and many darke wordes and not usual nor well sounding, though they be dayly spok in Court.” *

Before Puttenham, however, had published, another and a still more dangerous mode of corruption had infected English composition. In 1581, John Lilly, a dramatic poet, published a Romance in two parts, of which the first is entitled “*Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit*,” and the second, “*Euphues and his England*.” This production is a tissue of antithesis and alliteration, and therefore justly entitled to the appellation of affected; but we cannot with Berkenhout consider it as “a most contemptible piece of nonsense.” † The moral is uniformly good; the vices and follies of the day are attacked with much force and keenness; there is in it much display of the manners of the times, and though, as a composition, it is very meretricious, and sometimes absurd in point of ornament, yet the construction of its sentences is frequently turned with peculiar neatness and spirit, though with much monotony of cadence. William Webbe, no mean judge, speaking of those who had attained a good grace and sweet vein in eloquence, adds,

‘Among whom I think there is none that will gainsay but Master John Lilly hath deserved most high commendations, as he who hath stepped one step farther therein than any since he first began the witty discourse of his *EUPHUES*, whose works surely in respect of his singular eloquence

* *Arte of English Poesie*, 1589, p. 121.

† *Biographia Literaria*, p. 377.

and brave composition of apt words and sentences, let the learned examine, and make a tryall thereof through all parts of rhetoric in fit phrases, in pithy sentences, in gallant tropes, in flowing speech, in plain sense; and surely in my judgment I think he will yield him that verdict, which Quintilian giveth of both the best orators, Demosthenes and Tully; that from one nothing may be taken away, and to the other nothing may be added ;” *

an encomium that was repeated by Nash, Lodge, and Meres, but which should be contrasted with the sounder opinion of Drayton, who in his *Epistle of Poets and Poesy*, mentioning the noble Sidney,

“ That heroe for numbers and for prose,”

observes that he

——— “ thoroughly pac’d our language as to show
The plenteous English hand in hand might go
With Greek and Latin, and did first reduce
Our tongue from *Lilly’s* writing then in use ;
Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
Playing with words, and idle similies,
As th’ English apes, and very zanies be
Of every thing that they do hear and see,
So imitating his ridiculous tricks,
They speak and write, all like mere lunatics.”

Yet the most correct description of the merits and defects of this once celebrated author has been given by Oldys, in his “ *Librarian*,” p. 90, who remarks that

“ *Lilly* was a man of great reading, good memory, ready faculty of application, and uncommon eloquence ; but he ran into a vast excess of allusion ; in sentence and conformity of style he seldom speaks directly to the purpose, but is continually carried away by one odd allusion or simile or other (out of natural history, that is yet fabulous and not true in nature), and that still overborne by more, thick upon the back of one another ; and through an eternal affectation of sententiousness keeps to such a formal measure of his periods as soon grows tiresome ; and so, by confining himself to shape his sense so frequently into one artificial cadence, however ingenious or harmonious, abridges that variety which the style should be admired for.”

So greatly was the style of *Euphues* admired in the court of Elizabeth, and, indeed, throughout the kingdom, that it became a proof of refined manners to adopt its phraseology. Edward Blount, who republished six of *Lilly’s* plays, in 1632, under the title of “ *Sixe Court Comedies*,” declares that “ Our nation are in his debt for a new English which hee taught them. *Euphues* and his England,” he adds, “ began first that language. All our ladies were then his scollers ; and that beautie in court who could not parley *Euphuesme*, was as little regarded as shee which now there speakes not French ;” a representation certainly not exaggerated ; for Ben Jonson, describing a fashionably lady, makes her address her gallant in the following terms :—“ O master Brisk (as it is in *Euphues*), hard is the choice when one is compell’d, either by silence to die with grief, or by speaking, to live with shame :” upon which Mr. Whalley observes, that the court ladies in Elizabeth’s time had all the phrases of *Euphues* by heart. †

Scarcely had corruption from this source ceased to violate the purity and propriety of our language, when the fashion of interlarding composition with a perpetual series of Latin quotations commenced ; a custom which continued until the close of the reign of James, and gave to the style of this period a complexion the most heterogeneous and absurd, being, in fact, composed of two languages, half Latin and half English. Of this barbarous and pedantic habit, the works of Bishop Andrews afford the most flagrant instance ; an example which, we have reason to regret, was followed too closely by Robert Burton, who, when he trusts to his native tongue, has written in a style at once simple and impressive.

These affectations, arising from the use of inkhorn terms, of antithesis, alliteration, arbitrary orthography, and the perpetual intermixture of Latin phraseo-

* Vide Oldys’s *British Librarian*, p. 90.

† *Every Man Out of His Humour*, act. v. sc. 10.

logy, have been deservedly and powerfully ridiculed by Sir Philip Sidney and Shakspeare; by the former under the character of Rombus, a village schoolmaster, in a masque, presented to Her Majesty in Wansted Garden, and by the latter in the person of Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The satire of Sir Philip is supported with humour; Her Majesty is supposed to have parted, by her presence, a violent contest between two shepherds for the affection of the Lady of the May, on which event Rombus comes forward with a learned oration.

"Now the thunder-thumping Jove transfused his dotes into your excellent formositie, which have with your resplendent beames thus segregated the enmity of these rurall animals; I am *Potentissima Domina*, a Schoole-master, that is to say, a Pedagogue, one not a little versed in the disciplinating of the juvenall frie, wherein (to my laud I say it) I use such geometrical proportions, as neither wanted mansuetude nor correction, for so it is described;

'Parcare subjectos, et debellare superbos.'

"Yet hath not the pulchritude of my vertues protected me from the contaminating hands of these Plebeians; for coming *solummodo*, to have parted their sanguinolent fray, they yeilded me no more reverence, than if I had been some *Pecoriorum Asinus*. I, even I, that am, who am I? *Dixi verbus sapiento satum est*. But what said that Troian *Æneas*, when he sojourned in the surging sulkes of the sandiferous seas, *Hæc olim memonasse juvebit*. Well, well, *ad propositos reverteto*, the puritie of the verity is that a certaine *Pulchra puella profecto*, elected and constituted by the integrated determination of all this topographically region as the soveraigne Ladie of this Dame Maies month, hath beene *quodammodo* hunted, as you would say, pursued by two, a brace, a couple, a cast of young men, to whom the crafty coward *Cupid* had *inquam* delivered his dire-dolorous dart;" here the May-Lady interfeiring calls him a tedious fool, and dismisses him; upon which in anger he exclaims,—

"O *Tempori*, O *Moribus*! in profession a childe, in dignitie a woman, in yeares a Ladie, in *cæteris* a maide, should thus turpifie the reputation of my doctrine, with the superscription of a foole, O *Tempori*, O *Moribus*!" *

The Schoolmaster of Shakspeare appears, from the researches of Warburton and Dr. Farmer, to have been intended as a satire upon John Florio, whose "First Fruits, or Dialogues in Italian and English," were published in 1578, his Second in 1591, and his "Worlde of Wordes" in 1598. He was ludicrously pedantic, dogmatic, and assuming, and gave the first affront to the dramatic poets of his day, by affirming that "the plaies that they plaie in England, are neither right comedies, nor right tragedies; but representations of histories without any decorum." The character of Holofernes, however, while it caricatures the peculiar folly and ostentation of Florio, holds up to ridicule, at the same time, the general pedantry and literary affectations of the age; and amongst these very particularly the absurd innovations which Lilly had introduced. Sir Nathaniel, praising the specimen of alliteration which Holofernes exhibits in his "extemporal epitaph," calls it "a rare talent;" upon which the schoolmaster comments on the compliment in a manner which pretty accurately describes the fantastic genius of the author of *Euphues*:

"This is a gift that I have, simple, simple; a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions: these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*; and deliver'd upon the mellowing of occasion;" and subsequently in a strain of good sense not very common from the mouth of this imperious pedant, he still more definitely points out the foppery of Lilly both in style and pronunciation,— "He is too picked," he remarks, "too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it.—He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasms, such insociable and point devise companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak, dout, fine, when he should say, doubt; det, when he should pronounce, debt; d, e, b, t; not d, e, t: he clepeth a calf, cauf; half, hauf; neighbour, *vocatur* nebour; neigh, abbreviated, ne: This is abominable (which he would call abominable), it insinuateth me of insanie; *Ne intelligis domine?* to make frantic, lunatic."

Yet, notwithstanding these various attempts, all tending to corrupt the purity

* Sir Philip Sidney's Works, 7th edit. 1629, fol., p. 619, 620.

of our language, and originating from the pedantic taste of the age, and from a love of novelty and over-refinement, English style more rapidly improved during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, than has been the case in any previous or subsequent period of our annals. To establish this assertion, we have only to appeal to the great writers of this era, and among these, it will be sufficient to mention the names of Raleigh, Hooker, Bacon, and Daniel, masters of a style, at once vigorous, perspicuous, and often richly modulated. If to this brief catalogue, though adequate to our purpose, we add the prose of Ascham, Sidney, Southwell, Knolles, Hakewell, and Peacham, still omitting many authors of much merit, it may justly be affirmed, that no specimens of excellence in dignified and serious composition could be wanting as exemplars. That the good sense of the age was aware of the value of these writers, in point of style, though surrounded by innovations supported by rank and fashion, may be concluded from the admonitions of Peacham, who in his chapter "Of style, in speaking and writing," not only describes the style which ought to be adopted, but enumerates the authors who have afforded the best examples of it for the student.

"Let your style," he admirably observes, "bee furnished with solid matter, and compact of the best, choice, and most familiar words; taking heed of speaking, or writing such words, as men shall rather admire than understand.—Flowing at one and the selfe same height, neither taken in and knit up too short, that, like rich hangings of Arras or Tapisstry, thereby lose their grace and beautie, as Themistocles was wont to say: nor suffered to spread so farre, like soft Musicke in an open field, whose delicious sweetnesse vanisheth, and is lost in the ayre.

"To helpe yourselfe herein, make choice of those authors in prose, who speake the best and purest English. I would commend unto you (though from more antiquity) the "Life of Richard the Third," written by Sir Thomas More; the "Arcadia" of the noble Sir Philip Sidney, whom Du Bartas makes one of the foure columnes of our language; the "Essayes, and other peeces of the excellent master of eloquence, my Lord of S. Albanes," who possessed not onely eloquence, but all good learning, as hereditary both by father and mother. You have then "M. Hooker, his Policy:" "Henry the Fourth," well written by S. John Heyward; that first part of our English Kings, by M. Samuel Daniel. There are many others I know, but these will tast you best, as proceeding from no vulgar judgment."*

With regard to the state of colloquial language during this epoch, it may safely be asserted, that a reference to the works of Shakspeare will best acquaint us with the "diction of common life," with the tone of conversation which prevailed both in the higher and lower ranks of society; for the dialogue of his most perfect comedies is, by many degrees, more easy, lively, and perspicuous, than that of any other contemporary dramatic writer.

It is by no means, however, our wish to infer, from what has been said in praise of the prose writers of this period, that they are to be considered as perfect models in the nineteenth century; on the contrary, it must be confessed, that the best of them exhibit abundant proof of quaintness and prolixity, of verbal pedantry and inverted phraseology; and though the language, through their influence, made unparalleled strides, and fully unfolded its copiousness, energy, and strength, it remained greatly deficient in correctness and polish, in selection of words, and harmony of arrangement.†

These defects, especially the two latter, are to be attributed, in a great measure, to philological studies being almost exclusively confined to the learned languages, a subject of complaint with a few individuals, who lamented the neglect which this classical-enthusiasm entailed on their native tongue. Thus Arthur Golding, in some verses prefixed to Baret's *Alviarie*, after observing that

—————"all good inditers find
Our Inglish tongue driven almost out of kind,

* Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*, 4to. 2d edit. p. 43, 53.

† For specimens of the prose writers of this period, the introduction of which would be too digressive for the plan of this work, I venture to refer the reader to my *Essays on the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian*, 1805, vol. ii. part 3. Essay II. on the Progress and Merits of English Style; or to Burnett's *Specimens of English Prose Writers*, vol. ii. 1807.

Dismembred, hacked, maymed, rent and torne,
Defaced, patched, mard, and made a skorne,"

adds with great truth and good sense,

" No doubt but men should shortly find there is
As perfect order, as firm certeintie,
As grounded rules to trie out things amisse,
As much sweete grace, as great varietie
Of wordes and phrazes, as good quantitie
For verse or proze in English every waie,
As any comen language hath this daie.
And were wée given as well to like our owne,
And for to clense it from the noisome wéede
Of affectation which hath overgrowne
Ungraciously the good and native séede,
As for to borrowe where wée have no néede :
It would pricke néere the learned tungs in strength,
Perchance, and match mée some of them at length." *

The ardour for classical acquisition was, at this time, indeed, so prevalent among the learned and the great, that the mythology as well as the diction of the ancients became fashionable. The amusements, and even the furniture of the opulent, their shows, and masques, the hangings and the tapestries of their houses, and their very cookery, assumed an erudite, and what would now be termed, a pedantic cast.

" Every thing," says Warton, speaking of this era, " was tinctured with ancient history and mythology.—When the Queen paraded through a country town, almost every pageant was a pantheon. When she paid a visit at the house of any of her nobility, at entering the hall she was saluted by the Penates, and conducted to her privy-chamber by Mercury. Even the pastry-cooks were expert mythologists. At dinner, select transformations of Ovid's metamorphoses were exhibited in confectionary: and the splendid iceing of an immense historic plumb-cake, was embossed with a delicious basso-relievo of the destruction of Troy. In the afternoon, when she condescended to walk in the garden, the lake was covered with Tritons and Nereids: the pages of the family were converted into Wood-nymphs, who peeped from every bower: and the footmen gamboled over the lawns in the figure of Satyrs." †

In the course of a few years the same taste descended to the inferior orders of society, owing to the numerous versions which rapidly appeared of the best writers of Greece and Rome. The rich catalogue of translations to which Shakspeare had access, may be estimated from the very accurate list which is inserted in the Variorum editions of the poet, and before the death of James the First, not a single classic, we believe, of any value, remained unfamiliarized to the English reader.

The height which classical learning had attained about the year 1570, may be estimated from the testimony of Ascham, a most consummate judge, who, quoting Cicero's assertion with regard to Britain, that " there is not one scruple of silver in that whole isle; or any one that knoweth either learnyng or letter," ‡ thus apostrophizes the Roman orator:

" But now master Cicero, blessed be God, and his sonne Jesus Christ, whom you never knew, except it were as it pleased him to lighten you by some shadow; as covertlie in one place ye confesse, saying, *Veritatis tantum umbram consecramur*, as your master Plato did before you: blessed be God, I say, that sixteen hundred yeare after you were dead and gone, it may trewly be sayd, that for silver, there is more comlie plate in one citie of Englande, than is in four of the proudest cities in all Italie, and take Rome for one of them: and for learning, beside the know-

* Vide Preface to Baret's *Alvearie*, or *Quadruple Dictionary*, English, Latin, Greek, and French, bl. 1. folio, London, 1580.

† History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 492.

‡ Britannici belli exitus expectatur: constat enim aditus insulæ esse munitos mirificis molibus. Etiam illud jam cognitum est, neque argenti scrupulum esse ullum in illa insula, neque ullam spem prædæ, nisi ex mancipiis: ex quibus nullos puto te litteris, aut musicis eruditos expectare. Cic. lib. iv. Epist. ad Attic. ep. 16.

ledge of all learned tonges and liberal sciences, even your owne bookes, Cicero, be as well read, and your excellent eloquence is as well liked and loved, and as trewly folowed in Englande at this day, as it is now, or ever was since your own tyme, in any place of Italie, either at Arpinum, where you was borne, or els at Rome, where you was brought up. And a little to brag with you, Cicero, where you yourselfe, by your leave, halted in some point of learning in your own tongue, many in Englande at this day go streight up, both in trewe skill, and right doing therein.”*

Nor can this progress in the learned languages be considered as surprising, when we recollect the vast encouragement given to these studies, not only by the nobility but by the Queen herself; who was, in fact, a most laborious and erudite author, who wrote a Commentary on Plato, translated from the Greek two of the Orations of Isocrates, a play of Euripides, the Hiero of Xenophon, and Plutarch de Curiositate; from the Latin, Sallust de Bello Jugurthino, Horace de Arte Poetica, Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiæ, a long chorus from the Hercules OEtæus of Seneca, one of Cicero's epistles, and another of Seneca's; who wrote many Latin letters, many English original works, both in prose and poetry, and who spoke five languages with facility.† The British Solomon, it is well known, was equally zealous and industrious in the cause of learning, and both not only patronized individuals, but founded and endowed public seminaries; Elizabeth was the founder of Westminster-School, and of Jesus-College, Oxford, and to James the University of Edinburgh owes its existence. This laudable spirit was not confined to regal munificence; in 1584, Emanuel-College, Cambridge, rose on the site of the Dominican convent of Black Friars, through the exertions of Sir Walter Mildmay; and in 1594, Sidney-Sussex College, in the same University, sprung from the patronage of the Dowager of Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex.

Of the modern languages cultivated at this period, the Italian took the lead, and became so fashionable at the court of Elizabeth, and among all who had pretensions to refinement, that it almost rivalled the classical mania of the day. The Queen spoke it with great purity, and among those who professed to teach it, Florio, whom we have formerly mentioned as the object of Shakspeare's satire, was the most eminent. He was pensioned by Lord Southampton, and on the accession of James, was appointed reader of the Italian language to Queen Anne, with a stipend of 100*l.* a-year. So popular were the writers of this fascinating country, that the English language was absolutely inundated with versions of the Italian poets and novelists, a consequence of which Roger Ascham bitterly complains; for, lamenting the diffusion of Italian licentiousness, he exclaims,—

“These be the inchantmentes of Circe, brought out of Italie, to marre men's maners in Englande; much by example of ill life, but more by precepts of fond bookes, of late translated out of Italian into Englishe, sold in every shop in London:—there be moe of these ungratious bookes set out in printe within these few monethes, than have been sene in Englande many score yeares before.—Then they have in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche, than the Genesis of Moses; they make more account of a tale in Boccace, than a storie of the Bible.”‡

It must be allowed, we think, that the censure of Ascham partakes too much of puritanic sourness; for these “ungratious bookes” we find to have been the great classics of Italy, Petrarca, Boccacio, etc. writers who, though occasionally romantic in their incidents, and gross in their imagery, yet presented many just views of life and manners, and many rich examples of harmonious style and fervid imagination. They contributed also very powerfully by the variety and fertility of their fictions to stimulate the poets of our country, and especially the dramatic, who have been indebted to this source more than to any other for the groundwork of their plots. It is, indeed, sufficiently honourable to Italian literature,

* Ascham's Works, Bennet's edit. 4to. p. 333.

† Park's edition of Lord Oxford's Royal and Noble Authors, vol. i. article Elizabeth.

‡ Ascham's Works, Bennet's edit. 4to. p. 253, 255, 256.

that we shall find our unrivalled Shakspeare occasionally indebted to it for the hints which awakened his muse.

We are not to conclude, however, that the labours of our translators were confined to the poetry and romance of Italy, and that its moral, historical, and didactic compositions were utterly neglected. This was so far from being the case, that most of the esteemed productions in these departments were as speedily naturalized as those of the lighter class; and among them we may mention two works which must have had no inconsiderable influence in polishing and refining the manners of our countrymen. In 1576, Robert Peterson, of Lincoln's-Inn, translated the "Galateo" of John de la Casa, a system of politeness to which Chesterfield has been much indebted; * and in 1588, Thomas Hobby published a version of the Cortigiano of Baldassar Castiglione, a work in equal estimation as a manual of elegance, and termed by the Italians "the Golden Book." †

The philological attainments of this age, with respect to Greek, Latin, and English, will be placed in a still more compendiously clear light, by a mere enumeration of those who greatly excelled in rendering their acquisition more systematic and correct. Both Greek and English literature were early indebted to the labours of Sir Thomas Smith, who was appointed public lecturer at Cambridge on the first of these languages, the study of which he much facilitated by a new method of accentuation and pronunciation; publishing at the same time an improved system of orthography for his native tongue. These useful works were printed together in 4to, in 1568, under the titles of "De recta et emendata linguæ Græcæ pronuntiatione," and "De recta et emendata linguæ Anglicæ scriptione.

Another equally eminent Grecian philologer appeared at the same time, in the person of Sir Henry Savile, who was Greek preceptor to Elizabeth, warden of Merton-College, and provost of Eton. He was editor of the works of Chrysostom, with notes, in 8 vols. folio, 1613, the most elaborate Greek production which had hitherto issued from an English press: of Xenophon's "Cyropædia," and of the "Steluteutici" of Nazianzen. He translated also into English, as early as 1581, the first four books of the History of Tacitus, and his Life of Agricola, accompanied by very valuable annotations, which were afterwards published in a Latin version, by Gruter, at Amsterdam.

To his able assistant, also, in editing the works of Chrysostom, the Rev. John Boys, much gratitude is due for his enthusiasm in the cause of Grecian lore. So attached was he to this study, that during his fellowship of St. John's College, Cambridge, he voluntarily gave a Greek lecture every morning in his own room at four o'clock; and, what affords a still more striking picture of the learned enthusiasm of the times, it is recorded that this very early prelection was regularly attended by nearly all the fellows of his college!

Latin Literature appears to have been cultivated with greater purity and success in the prior than in the latter portion of Elizabeth's reign. It is scarcely necessary to mention the great names of George Buchanan and Walter Haddon, who divided the attention of the classical world, and drew from Elizabeth the following terse expression on their comparative merits:—"Buchananum omnibus antepono; Haddonum nemini postpono."

Nor can we fail to recollect the truly admirable production of Ascham, the "Schole Master; or plaine and perfite Way of teaching Children, to understand,

* "Galateo of Maister John Della Casa Aschbishop of Beneuenta, or rather a treatise of the maners and behaiours it behoveth a man to use and eschewe, in his familiar conversation. A worke very necessary and profitable for all gentlemen or other. First written in the Italian tongue, and now done into English by Robert Paterson of Lincolnes Inne Gentleman. Satis si sapienter. Imprinted at London for Raufe Newbery, dwelling in Fleete streate, a little above the Conduit. An. Do. 1576. 4to. 68 leaves. b. 1"

† "The Courtier of Count Baldessar Castilio, devided into foure bookes. Verie necessarie and profitable for young Gentlemen and Gentlewomen abiding in Court, Pallace, or Place. Done into English by Thomas Hobby. London: Printed by John Wolfe, 1588. 4to. p. 616."

write, and speake, the Latin Tonge:" than which a more interesting and judicious treatise has not appeared upon the subject in any language.

Among the most eminent Latin philologers who witnessed the close of the sixteenth century, may be mentioned the name of Edward Grant, Master of Westminster-School, who was celebrated for his Latin poetry, and who published, in 1577, "*Oratio de vita et obitu Rogeri Aschami, ac dictionis elegantia, cum adhortatione ad adolescentulos.*" He died in 1601.

With Grant should be classed the master of the free-school of Taunton in Somersetshire, John Bond, who subsequently practised as a physician, and died in 1612. He published, in 1606, some valuable commentaries, in the Latin language, on the poems of Horace, and, in 1614, on the Six Satires of Persius.

Roman literature, however, in this country was under yet higher obligations to John Rider, than to either of the preceding philologers; this learned prelate being the compiler of the first dictionary in our language, in which the English is placed before the Latin. It is entitled "*A Dictionary Engl. and Latin, and Latin and English.*" Oxon. 1589. 4to. Rider was promoted to the See of Killaloe in 1612, and died in 1632.

In our observations on the state of the English language we have noticed the labours of Ascham and Wilson as pre-eminently conducive to its improvement; the first of these writers having published two excellent models for English composition, and the second having presented us with a valuable treatise on rhetoric. To these should be added the efforts of Richard Mulcaster, first master of the Merchant-Taylors School, who, in 1581, published his "*Positions, wherein those primitive circumstances be examined which are necessarie for the training up of Children, either for skill in their Book or Health in their Bodie;*" a work which was followed, in the subsequent year, by "*The first Part of the Elementarie, which entreateth chesely of the right Writing of the English Tung.*"

The Positions and the Elementarie of Mulcaster, though inferior in literary merit to the Scholemaster of Ascham, contributed materially to the progress of English philology, as they contain many valuable and acute observations on our language.

It appears, from the assertion of William Bullokar, an able co-operator in the work of education, that he was the author of the first English Grammar. In 1586 he printed his "*Bref grammar for English,*" which is likewise entitled in fol. 1, "*W. Bullokar's abbreviation of his Grammar for English extracted out of his Grammar at larg for the spedi parcing of English spech, and the eazier coming to the knowledge of grammar for other langages;*" and Warton adds, in his account of Bullokar's writings, that among Tanner's books was found "*a copy of his bref grammar above mentioned, interpolated and corrected with the author's own hand, as it appears, for a new impression.*" In one of these manuscript insertions, he calls this, "*the first grammar for English that ever was, except my grammar at large.*" *

It is not exactly ascertained in what year the Grammar of Ben Jonson was written, as it did not appear until after his death; but it may be safely affirmed that to this production of the once celebrated rival and contemporary of Shakspeare, the English language has been more indebted than to the labours certainly of any previous, and we may almost add, of any subsequent, grammarian, Lowth's and Murray's even not excepted.

The next branch of our present subject embraces the department of Criticism, which was cultivated in this period to a great extent, and we are sorry to add not seldom with uncommon bitterness and malignity. Numerous are the writers who complain of the very severe and sarcastic tone in which the critics of the age indulged; but one instance or two will be sufficient to prove both the fre-

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 346, 347.

quency and asperity of the art. Robert Armin, in his Address "Ad Lectorem hic et ubique," prefixed to "The Italian Taylor and his Boy," says, speaking of his pen, "I wander with it now in a strange time of taxation, wherein every pen and inck-horne Boy will throw up his cap at the hornes of the Moone in censure, although his wit hang there, not returning unlesse monthly in the wane: such is our ticklish age, and the itching braine of abundance;" and in the "Troia Britannica" of Thomas Heywood, the author, saluting his various readers under the titles of the Courteous, the Criticke, and the Scornefull, tells the latter, "I am not so unexperienced in the envy of this Age, but that I knowe I shall encounter most sharpe and severe Censurers, such as continually carpe at other mens labours, and superficially perusing them, with a kind of negligence and skorne, quote them by the way, Thus: This is an error, that was too much streacht, this too slightly neglected, heere many things might have been added, there it might have been better followed: this superfluous, that ridiculous. These indeed knowing no other meanes to have themselves opinioned in the ranke of understanders, but by calumniating other mens industries."

If such proved the strain of general, we need not be surprised if controversial criticism assumed a still more tremendous aspect. Between the Puritans, in the reign of Elizabeth, who carried on their warfare under the fictitious appeal of Martin Mar-prelate, and the members of the episcopal church, a torrent of libels broke forth, which inundated the country with a deluge of distorted ridicule and rancorous abuse. Nor were the quarrels of literary men conducted with less ferocity, though perhaps with more wit. The republic of letters was, indeed, infested for near twenty years, from the year 1580 to 1600, with a set of Town-wits, who, void of all moral principle or decent restraint, employed their pens in lashing to death, with indiscriminate rage, the objects of their envy or their spleen. Of this description were those noted characters, Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Dekker, and Thomas Nash; men possessed of genius, learning, and unquestioned ability, as poets, satirists, and critics; but excessively debauched in their manners, intemperate in their passions, and heedless of what they inflicted. The treatment which Gabriel Harvey, the bosom-friend of Spenser and Sidney, received from the scurrilous criticism of Greene and Nash, was, though not altogether unprovoked, beyond all measure gross, cruel, and vindictive. The literature and the moral character of Harvey were highly respectable; but he was vain, credulous, affected, and pedantic; he published a collection of panegyrics on himself; he turned astrologer and almanack-maker, he was perfectly Italianated in his dress and manner, in his style he was pompously elaborate, and he boasted himself the inventor and introducer of English Hexameters.* These foibles, together with the obscurity of his parentage, his father being a rope-maker at Saffron-Walden, in Essex, a circumstance of which he had the folly to be ashamed, furnished to his adversaries an inexhaustible fund of ridicule and wit; and had these legitimate ingredients been unmingled with personal invective and brutal sarcasm, Gabriel, who was no mean railer himself, had not been sinned against; but the malignity of Greene and Nash was unbounded; and Harvey, who was morbidly irritable and bled at every pore, catching a portion of their spirit, the controversy be-

* One of his specimens of "our Englishe reformed Versifying," as he terms it, is entitled *Encomium Lauri*, and commences thus:—

"What might I call this Tree? A Laurell? O bonny Laurell:
Needes to thy bowes will I bow this knee, and vayne my bonetto;"

lines which Nash, in his *Four Letters confuted*, 1593, has most happily ridiculed, representing Harvey walking under the "ewe-tree at Trinitie Hall," and addressing it in similar terms, and making "verses of weather-cocks on the top of steeples, as he did once of the weather-cocke of Allhallows in Cambridge:—

"O thou weather-cocke, that stands on the top of All-hallows,
Come thy waies down, if thou dar'st for thy crowne, and take the wall of us!"

Vide *Todd's Spenser*, vol. i. p. xliii.

came so outrageously virulent, that the prelates of Canterbury and London, Whitgift and Bancroft, interfering, issued an order, "that all Nashe's books and Dr. Harvey's books be taken wheresoever they may be found, and that none of the said books be ever printed hereafter; an injunction which has rendered most of the pamphlets on this literary quarrel extremely scarce, particularly Harvey's "Four Letters And Certaine Sonnets. Especially touching Robert Greene and other Poets by him abused. Imprinted by John Wolfe, 1592;" a very curious work, which we shall have occasion to quote hereafter; and Nash's "Have with you to Saffron-Walden, or Gabriel Harvey's hunt is up," 1596, which includes a humorous but unmerciful representation of Gabriel's life and character, the bitter satirist exulting in the idea that he had brought on his adversary, by the poignancy of his invectives, the effects of premature old age. "I have brought him low," he exclaims, "and shrewly broken him; look on his head, and you shall find a gray hair for everie line I have writ against him; and you shall have all his beard white too by the time he hath read over this book." *

How great a nuisance this bevy of lampooning critics was considered, and to what a height their shameless effrontery was carried, may be learnt from a passage in a pamphlet by Dr. Lodge, a contemporary physician of great learning and good sense, who though he terms Nash, and perhaps very justly, "the true English Aretine," has drawn a picture which applies to him as accurately as to any individual of the class; "a fellow," to adopt the words of an old play with respect to this very man, "that carried the deadly stocke in his pen, whose muze was armed with a jag tooth, and his pen possest with Hercules furies." †

"You shall know him" (the envious critic), says Lodge, "by this; he is a foule lubber, his tongue tipt with lying, his heart steeled against charity; he walks, for the most part, in black, under colour of gravity, and looks as pale as y^e wizzard of the ghost which cried so miserably at y^e theater, like an oister wife, Hamlet revenge: he is full of infamy and slander, insomuch as if he ease not his stomach in detracting somewhat or some man before noontide, he falls into a fever that holds him while supper time; he is alwaies devising of epigrams or scoffes and grumbles, necromances continually, although nothing crosse him, he never laughs but at other men's harms, briefly in being a tyrant over men's fames; he is a very Titius (as Virgil saith) to his owne thoughtes.

" Titiique vultus inter
Qui semper lacerat comestque mentem.

"The mischief is, that by grave demeanour and newes bearing, he hath got some credite with the greater sort, and manie fowles there bee, that because he can pen prettilee, hold it gospell whatever he writes or speakes, his custome is to preferre a foole to credite, to despight a wise man, and no poet lives by him that hath not a flout of him. Let him spie a man of wit in a taverne, he is a hare brained quareller. Let a scholler write, Tush (saith he) I like not these common fellowes; let him write well, he hath stolen it out of some note booke; let him translate, tut it is not of his owne; let him be named for preferment, he is insufficient because poore; no man shall rise in his world, except to feed his envy; no man can continue in his friendship who hateth all men." He then adds the following judicious advice, predicting what would be the consequence of neglecting to pursue it:—"Divine wits for many things as sufficient as all antiquity (I speake it not on slight surmise, but considerate judgment) to you belongs the death that doth nourish this poison; to you the paine that endure the reproofe. Lilly, the famous for facility in discourse; Spencer, best read in ancient poetry; Daniel, choice in word and invention; Draiton, diligent and formall; Th. Nash, true English Aretine. All you unnamed professors, or friends of poetry (but by me inwardly honoured) knit your industries in private to unite your fames in publicke; let the strong stay up the weake, and the weake march under conduct of the strong; and all so imbattle yourselves, that hate of vertue may not imbase you. Bu if besotted with foolish vain glory, emulation and contempt, you fall to neglect one another, 'Quod Deus

* See a copious and interesting account of the controversy between Nash and Harvey, in D'Israeli's *Calamities of Authors*, vol. ii. p. 1. ad 49.

† The *Returne from Parnassus*; or the *Scourge of Simony*, publicly acted by the Students in St. John's College in Cambridge, 1606.—Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. p. 49.

omen avertat,' doubtless it will be as infamous a thing shortly to present any book whatsoever learned to any Mæcenæ in England, as it is to be headsman in any free city in Germanie." *

Turning, however, from this abuse of critical and satiric talent, let us direct our attention exclusively to those productions of the art which are distinguished as well by moderation and urbanity, as by learning and acumen.

It is worthy of remark that in English literature, during this era, nearly all the professed critical treatises, if we except those of Wilson and Ascham, were employed on the subject of poetry. We shall confine ourselves, therefore, to a chronological enumeration, accompanied by a few observations, of these interesting pieces. The first, in the order of time, is a production of George Gascoigne the poet, and was published at the close of the second edition of "The Posies of George Gascoigne Esquire, Corrected, perfected, and augmented by the Authour, 1575. Tam Marti, quam Mercurio. Imprinted at London by H. Bynneman for Richard Smith." It is entitled, "Certaine notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English, written at the request of Master Edovardo Donati;" and was again printed in "The whole workes of George Gascoigne, Esq. newlye compyled into one volume, b. l. 1587. This little tract is more didactic than critical; but contains several judicious directions, and some sensible remarks.

Ten years after, appeared a treatise on "Scottis Poesie," from the pen of King James the First, when only eighteen years of age. This learned monarch commenced his career of authorship with "The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine art of Poesie. Imprinted at Edinburgh, by Thomas Vautrouiller, 1585, 4to. Cum privilegio Regali." The fifth article in this miscellany includes the criticism in question, under the title of "Ane schort Treatise, containing some reulis and cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis poesie." This is a production highly curious, as well for its manner as matter; for, not content with mere precept, the royal critic has given us copious specimens of the several kinds of verse then in use. The eighth chapter of this short treatise is devoted to this purpose, detailing rules and examples, 1st, For lang histories. 2dly, For heroic acts. 3dly, For heich and grave subjects. 4thly, For tragic matters. 5thly, For Flyting or invectives. 6thly, For Sonnet verse. 7thly, For Matters of love; and 8thly, For Tenfoot verse.

Under the fifth head is given as an exemplar of the Rouncefalles, or Tumbling verse, the lines formerly quoted from the Flyting of Montgomery, as illustrative of a superstition peculiar to Allhallow-Eve; and under the seventh, on "love materis," is introduced as an example of "cuttit and broken verse, quhairof new formes are daylie inventit according to the Poetis pleasour," the following stanza, which has been rendered familiar to an English ear by the genius of Burns:—

"Quha wald have tyrde to heir that tone,
Quhilk birds corroborat ay abone,
Through schouting of the larkis!
They sprang sa heich into the skyes,
Quhill Cupide walknis with the cryis
Of Nature's chapell clerkis.
Then leaving all the heavins above,
He lichted on the eard;

Lo! how that lytill god of love
Before me then appeared.
So mylde-like
And child-like,
With bow thre quarters skant,
So moilie
And coylie,
He lukit lyke a Sant."

It is observable that James, in assigning his "twa caussis" for composing this work, tells us that "albeit sindrie hes written of it (poesie) in English, quhilk is likest to our language, zit we differ from thame in sindrie reulis of poesie, as ze will find be experience;" but who these sundry writers were, has not, with the exception of Gascoigne's "Notes of Instruction," been hitherto discovered.†

* Wits Miserie And The Worlds Madnesse. Discovering the Devils incarnate of this Age. 1596.—Vide Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books, vol. ii. p. 164, 165.

† For a further and more minute account of James's "Essayes," I refer the reader to Pinkerton's Ancient Scottish Poems, vol. i. p. cxix.; to Park's Royal and Noble Authors, vol. i. p. 120; to Censura Literaria, vol. ii. p. 364; and to Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books, vol. i. p. 230.

It is barely possible that the royal critic may have included in his "sindrie," the next work which we have to record on the subject, the production of our immortal Spenser, and entitled "The English Poet," a work which we lament should have been suffered to perish in manuscript. Its existence was first intimated to the public in 1579, by E. K., in his argument to the tenth Aeglogue of the "Shepherd's Calender," with a promise, which unfortunately proved faithless, of committing it to the press. Poetry, observes this commentator, is "no art, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the witte by a certaine Enthusiasmos and celestial inspiration, as the Author hereof elsewhere at large discourseth in his booke called "The English Poet," which booke being lately come to my handes, I minde also by God's grace, upon further advisement, to publish." * That the taste and erudition of Spenser had rendered this critical essay highly interesting, there is every reason to conclude, and though the only positive testimony to its composition rests on the single authority which we have quoted, it is extremely probable, from the manner in which its acquisition by the commentator is mentioned, that the MS. had circulated, and continued to circulate, among the friends and admirers of the poet, for some years.

Scarcely had the British Solomon published his juvenile criticisms, when a kindred work issued from the London press, under the title of "A Discourse of English Poetrie, together with the Author's Judgment touching the reformation of our English verse. By William Webbe, Graduate. Imprinted at London by John Charlewood. 4to, 1586." Black letter.

The chief purport of this pamphlet, now so rare that only three copies are known to exist, † is to propose, what the author terms, "a perfect platform, or prosodia of versifying, in imitation of the Greeks and Latins," a scheme which, though supported by Sidney, Dyer, Spenser, and Harvey, happily miscarried. "The hexameter verse," says Nash, with great good sense, in his controversy with Harvey, "I graunt to be a gentleman of an auncient house (so is many an English beggar), yet this clyme of ours hee cannot thrive in; our speech is too craggy for him to set his plough in; hee goes twitching and hopping in our language, like a man running upon quagmires, up the hill in one syllable and downe the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gate which he vaunts himself with amongst the Greeks and Latins." ‡

Webbe's "Discourse," however, is valuable on account of the Characters which he has drawn of the English poets, from Chaucer to his own time. He notices, also, "Gaskoynes Instructions for versifying;" and, after declaring the Shepherd's Calender inferior neither to Theocritus nor Virgil, he expresses an ardent wish that the other works of Spenser might get abroad, and especially his "English Poet, which his friend E. K. did once promise to publish." The tract concludes with the author's assertion, that his "onely ende" in compiling it was "not as an exquisite censure concerning the matter," but "that it might be an occasion to have the same thoroughly, and with greater discretion taken in hande, and laboured by some other of greater abilitie, of whom I know there be manie among the famous poets in London, who both for learning and leysure may handle the argument far more pythelie." §

In 1588, Abraham Fraunce, another encourager and writer of English Hexameter and Pentameter verses, published in octavo, a critical treatise, a mixture of prose and verse, under the quaint title of "The Arcadian Rhetoricke, or the Precepts of Rhetoricke made plain by example, Greeke, Latyne, Englishe, Italian,

* Spenser's Works apud Todd, vol. i. p. 161.

† One in the King's Library, one in the late Mr. Malone's collection, and one purchased by the Marquis of Blandford, at the Roxburghe Sale, for 64*l.*!

‡ Vide Nash's "Four Letters Confuted," and his "Have with ye to Saffron-Walden," and D'Israeli's Calamities of Authors, vol. i.

§ Vide Oldys's British Librarian, p. 86, and Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books, vol. i. p. 234.

and Spanishe." This rare volume is in the library of Mr. Malone, and is valuable, observes Warton, for its English examples. *

In the same year which produced Fraunce's work, appeared the "Touch-Stone of Wittes," written by Edward Hake, and printed at London by Edmund Botifaut. This little tract is employed in sketching the features of the chief poets of the day; but differs not materially from "Webbe's Discourse of English Poetrie," from which, indeed, it is principally compiled. Hake describes himself (in another of his productions called "A Touchstone for this time present,") as an "attorney of the Common Pleas;" mentions his having been educated under John Hopkins, whom he terms a learned and exquisite teacher, and when criticising the "Mirrour of Magistrates" in his "Touchstone of Wittes," speaks of its augmentor, John Higgins, as his particular friend. †

But by far the most valuable work which was published in the province of criticism, during the life-time of Shakspeare, was written by George Puttenham, and entitled "The Arte of English Poesie, Contrived into three Bookes: The first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament. At London, Printed by Richard Field, dwelling in the black-Friers neere Ludgate. 1589."

This book, which seems to have been composed considerably anterior to its publication, was printed anonymously, and has been ascribed to Spenser and Sidney. ‡ Bolton, whose "Hypocritica" was written in the reign of James I., though not printed until 1722, mentions Puttenham, however, as the reputed author; and a reference to Bolton's manuscript, preserved in the archives at Oxford, enabled Anthony Wood to announce this fact to the public. "There is," says he, "a book in being called The Art of English Poesie, not written by Sydney, as some have thought, but rather by one Puttenham, sometime a Gentleman Pensioner to Qu. Elizab." §

An elegant reprint of this old critic has been lately (1811) edited by Mr. Haslewood, in which, with indefatigable industry and research, he has collected all that could throw light on the personal and literary history of his author. His opinion of the critical acumen of Puttenham, though favourable, is not too highly coloured. "Puttenham," he remarks, "was a candid but sententious critic. What his observations want in argument, is made up for by the soundness of his judgment; and his conclusions, notwithstanding their brevity, are just and pertinent. He did not hastily scan his author, to indulge in an untimely sneer, and his opinions were adopted by contemporary writers, and have not been dissented from by the moderns. **

Of the same tenour are the sentiments of Mr. Gilchrist, who opens his analysis of the "Arte of English Poesie," with asserting that it "is on many accounts one of the most curious and entertaining, and, intrinsically, one of the most valuable books of the age of Elizabeth;" infinitely superior, he adds, as an elementary treatise on the arts, to the volumes of Wilson and Webbe, "as being formed on a more comprehensive scale, and illustrated by examples; while the copious intermixture of contemporary anecdote, tradition, manners, opinions, and the numerous specimens of coeval poetry, no where else preserved, contribute to form a volume of infinite amusement, curiosity, and value." ††

To various parts of this interesting treatise, we shall have occasion frequently to refer, when discussing the subjects of miscellaneous poetry and metropolitan manners. It is indeed a store-house of poetical erudition.

The next work which, in the order of publication, falls under our notice, is Sir John Harrington's "Apologie of Poetry," prefixed in 1591 to his Version of the Orlando Furioso of Ariosto. It is a production of some merit, displaying both

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 406.

† Ibid p. 275.

‡ "Mr. Wanley, in his Catalogue of the Harley Library, says he had been told, that Edm. Spenser was the author of that book, which came out anonymous." Vide Todd's Spenser, vol. i. p. clviii.

§ Wood's Athenæ Oxon. edit. 1691. vol. i. col. 184.

** Haslewood's Reprint, 1811, p. xi.

†† Censura Literaria, vol. i. p. 339.

judgment and ingenuity; but is most remarkable for the earliest notice of Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie*, and for affording a striking proof of the obscurity in which that critic had enveloped himself with regard to its parentage; for though two years had elapsed since its publication, it appears that neither the Queen, her courtiers, nor the literary world, had the slightest idea of its origin, and Sir John speaks of the author under the appellation of "Ignoto." Neither," says he, "do I suppose it to be greatly behoovefull for this purpose, to trouble you with the curious definitions of a poet and poesie, and with the subtile distinctions of their sundrie kinds; nor to dispute how high and supernatural the name of a Maker is, so christened in English by that unknowne Godfather, that this last yeare save one, viz. 1589, set forth a booke called the *Art of English Poetrie*: and least of all do I purpose to bestow any long time to argue, whether Plato, Zenophon, and Erasmus, writing fictions and dialogues in prose, may justly be called poets, or whether Lucan writing a story in verse be an historiographer, or whether Master Faire translating Virgil, Master Golding translating Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and my selfe in this worke that you see, be any more than versifiers, as the same Ignoto termeth all translators."

Poetry, soon after the birth of this *Apology*, had to boast of a champion of still greater prowess, in the person of Sir Philip Sidney, whose "*Defence of Poesie*" was first made public in 1595. It had, however, been previously circulated in manuscript for some years; thus Sir John Harrington refers to it in his *Apology* 1591, and there is reason to believe, that it was written so early as 1581 or 1582. This delightful piece of criticism exhibits the taste and erudition of Sir Philip in a striking light; the style is remarkable for amenity and simplicity; the laws of the Drama and *Epopœa* are laid down with singular judgment and precision, and the cause of poetry is strenuously and successfully supported against the calumny and abuse of the puritanical scowlers, one of whom had the effrontery to dedicate to him his collection of scurrility, in the very title-page of which he classes poets with pipers and jesters, and terms them the "caterpillars of the commonwealth." *

A very ingenious "*Comparative Discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets*," was published by Francis Meres, in 1598, under the title of "*Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury*." † Meres is certainly much indebted to the thirty-first chapter of the first book of Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*; but he has considerably extended the catalogue of poets, and it should be added, that his comparisons are drawn with no small portion of skill and felicity, and that his criticisms are, for the most part, just and tersely expressed.

Another attempt was made, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to introduce the Roman measures into English verse, in a duodecimo entitled "*Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, by Thomas Campion, wherein it is demonstratively proved, and by example confirmed, that the English toong will receive eight severall kinds of numbers, proper to itselfe, which are all in this book set forth, and were never before this time by any man attempted." London; printed by Richard Field, for Andrew Wise. 1602.

The object of this tract, which is dedicated to Lord Buckhurst, whom he terms, "the noblest judge of poesie," was not only to recommend the adoption of classical metres, but to abolish, if possible, the use of rhyme. "For this end," says he in his preface, "have I studied to induce a true forme of versefying into our language, for the vulgar and unartificial custome of riming hath, I know, deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English Poesy."

* "*The Schole of Abuse*; containing a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, players, jesters, &c. and such like caterpillars of the commonwealth, by Ste. Gossen, Stud. Oxon. dedicated to M. Philip Sidney, Esquier, 1579.

† "*Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury. Being the second part of Wits Common Wealth. By Francis Meres, Maister of Artes of both Universities. Vivitur ingenio, cætera mortis erunt. At London printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be solde at his shop at the Royall Exchange. 1598.*" Small 8vo. leaves 174. We are under many obligations to Mr. Haslewood for reprinting the whole of the "*Comparative Discourse*" in the ninth volume of the *Censura Literaria*, as it must necessarily be to us a subject of frequent reference.

In consequence of this determination, he has enforced his "Observations" by examples on the classic model, without rhyme; and among them, at p. 12. is a specimen of what he calls *Licentiate Iambicks*, which is, in fact, our present blank verse.

This systematic attack upon rhyme speedily called for a consummate master of the art in its defence; for in 1603 appeared, "A Defence of Ryme, against a pamphlet intituled, *Observations in the Art of Poesie*, wherein is demonstratively proved that ryme is the fittest harmony of wordes that comports with our language." By Samuel Daniel.

It need scarcely be said that the elegant and correct poet has obtained a complete victory over his opponent, whom he censures, not so much for attempting the introduction of new measures, as for his abuse of rhyme; he might have shown his skill, he justly and eloquently observes, "without doing wrong to the honour of the dead, wrong to the fame of the living, and wrong to England, in seeking to lay reproach upon her native ornaments, and to turn the fair stream and full course of her accents, into the shallow current of a loose uncertainty, clean out of the way of her known delight. — Therefore here stand I forth," he adds in a subsequent paragraph, "only to make good the place we have thus taken up, and to defend the sacred monuments erected therein, which contain the honour of the dead, the fame of the living, the glory of peace, and the best power of our speech, and wherein so many honourable spirits have sacrificed to memory their dearest passions, showing by what divine influence they have been moved, and under what stars they lived."

Great modesty and good sense distinguish this pamphlet, in which the author candidly allows that rhyme has been sometimes too lavishly used and where blank verse might have been substituted with better effect, and he concludes his "Defence" with some excellent remarks on affectation in the choice and collocation of words, a vice from which he was more free than any of his contemporaries, simplicity and purity, in fact, being the leading features of his style.

The last critic of the era to which we are limited, is Edward Bolton, whose "*Hypercritica; Or a Rule of Judgment for writing or reading our Historys*," a small collection of tracts or essays, "occasioned," says Warton, "by a passage in Sir Henry Saville's Epistle prefixed to his edition of our old Latin historians, 1596," was supposed by Wood, in a note on the MS. preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, to have been written about 1610. But that this date is too early is evident from the work itself; for in the fourth essay, which is entitled "*Prime Gardens for gathering English*: according to the true gage or standard of the tongue about fifteen or sixteen years ago," King James's poetry is spoken of in the following manner: — "I dare not presume to speak of his Majesty's exercises in this heroick kind, because I see them all left out in that which Montague lord bishop of Winchester hath given us of his royal writings." * Now Bishop Montague's edition of James's Works was not published until 1616.

The principal writers in prose and poetry, anterior to 1600, are noticed in this fourth division of the "*Hypercritica*," and the judgment passed upon them is, in general, correct and satisfactory, and does credit to the "sensible old English critic," as Warton emphatically terms him.

It is remarkable that the "*Hypercritica*" should have been suffered to continue in its manuscript state until 1722, at which period it was printed by Anthony Hall at the end of Trivet's "*Annalium continuatio*." Oxford, 8vo.

Bolton, whom Ritson calls "a profound scholar and eminent critic," † was certainly a man of considerable learning, and occupied no small space in the public eye as an historian, philologist, and antiquary.

To this enumeration it may be necessary to add some notice of that industrious race of critics, termed *Commentators*; a species which, for the last half century,

* *Hypercritica*. Address iv. sect. 3. p. 237.

† *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 135.

has been employed as laboriously on old English, as formerly were the German Literati on ancient classical, literature. Of this mode of illustration, which has lately thrown so much light on the manners and learning of our poet's age, two early and very ingenious specimens may be mentioned under the reign of Elizabeth and James. The first is the Commentary of E. K. on the Shepheards Calender of Spenser, in 1579; and the second, the learned Notes of Selden on the first eighteen Songs of the Polyolbion of Drayton, 1612; both productions of great merit, but especially the last, which exhibits a large portion of acumen and research, united to an equal share of discrimination and judgment.

Such are the chief critics on English literature who flourished during the lifetime of Shakspeare. That some of them contributed very materially towards the improvement of polite literature, and especially of poetry, by stimulating the genius and guiding the taste of their contemporaries, must be readily granted, and more particularly may these benefits be attributed to the labours of Webbe, Puttenham, Sidney, and Meres. How far the manuscripts of Spenser and Bolton, at the commencement and termination of our critical era, assisted to enlighten the public mind, cannot now be ascertained; but as the circulation of works in this state is generally very confined, we cannot suppose, even admitting the industry and admiration of their favoured readers to have been strongly excited, that their effect could have been either widely or permanently felt.

It would be a subject of still greater curiosity, could we determine, with any approach towards precision, in what degree Shakspeare was indebted, for his progress in English literature, to the authors whom we have just enumerated, under the kindred branches of philology and criticism.

Of his assiduity as a reader of English books, whether original or translated, his works afford the most positive and abundant proofs; and that he was peculiarly attentive to the philology of his native language is to be learnt from the same source. We have already noticed his satirical allusion to Florio and Lilly in the character of Holofernes, and a similar stroke on the innovating pedantry of the times, will be found in his *Much Ado about Nothing*, which was probably directed against another equally bold attempt to alter the whole system of orthography. The experiment was made by Bullokar, of whose *Brief Grammar* a slight mention has been given, in a book entitled an "Amendment of Orthographie for English Speech," 1580; in which the author proposes not only an entire change in the established mode of spelling, but a total revolution also in the practice of printing. To level a sarcasm at the head of this daring innovator may have been the aim of the poet, where he represents Benedict complaining of Claudio, that "he was wont to speak plain, and to the purpose, like an honest man, and a soldier; and now he is turned ORTHOGRAPHER; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes." — Act ii. sc. 3.

In a former part of this work we have mentioned some of the books to which our great poet must have had recourse in the progress even of his limited education in the country; and on his settlement in London, we cannot, with any probability, conceive, that a mind so active, comprehensive, and acute, would sit down content with its juvenile acquisitions, and hesitate to inspect those treatises on philology and criticism which had acquired the popular approbation, and were adapted to the years of manhood. Not only, indeed, did he peruse with avidity the "*Arte of Rhetoricke*" of Wilson, and the "*Scolemaster*" of Ascham, but we are convinced, from a thorough study of his writings, that so extensive was his range of reading, that not a translation from the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, or French appeared, but what was soon afterwards to be found in the hands of Shakspeare. His dramas, in fact, even without the aid of his indefatigable commentators, assure us, in almost every page, that, if not erudite from the possession of many languages, he was truly and substantially learned in every other sense; in the vast accumulation of materials drawn through the medium of translation, from the most distant and varied sources.

That he had not only read, but availed himself professionally of Wilson's Rhetoric, will be evident, we think, from a passage quoted by Mr. Chalmers, from this critic, in support of a similar opinion. Wilson has mentioned Timon of Athens in such a manner as might lead Shakspeare to select this misanthrope for dramatic exhibition; but the very character and language of Dogberry seem to be anticipated in the following sketch:—"Another good fellow of the countrey, being an officer and mayor of a toun, and desirous to speak like a fine learned man, having just occasion to rebuke a runnegate fellowe, said after this wise, in agreate heate:—Thou yngraine and vacation knave, if I take thee any more within the circumcision of my dampnation, I will so corrupt thee, that all other vacation knaves shall take ilsampl by thee."*

We cannot, however, coalesce with Mr. Chalmers, in considering the character of Holofernes as founded on the Scholemaster of Ascham, and that in drawing the colloquial excellence ascribed to the pedagogue by Sir Nathaniel, the poet had in his minds-eye the conversation at Lord Burleigh's table, so strikingly recorded by Ascham in his preface. We have not the smallest doubt but that our author had read, and with much pleasure and profit, the invaluable treatise of that accomplished scholar; but the general folly and pedantry of Holofernes are such, notwithstanding the eulogium of his clerical companion, as to preclude all idea that the character could have been sketched from such a model;—it is, in fact, a broad caricature of some well known pedant of the day, and we must agree with the commentators in fixing upon Florio as the most probable prototype.

It will be readily granted, that, if Shakspeare were the assiduous reader which we have supposed him to be, and no judge, indeed, of his works can doubt it, he must have perused with peculiar interest the critical treatises on poets and poetry which were published during his march to fame. It will be considered, therefore, scarcely as an assumption to conclude, that the works of Webbe, Puttenham, Sidney, and Meres were familiar to his mind; and though he must have written with too much haste, and with too much attention to the gratifications of the million, to carry their precepts, and especially the strictures of Sidney, into perfect execution, yet it is very reasonable to conceive that even his early works may have been rendered less imperfect by the perusal of Webbe and Puttenham; and that, as he advanced in his professional career, the improved mechanism of his dramas, and his greater attention to the unities, may have been in some degrees derived from the keen invectives of Sir Philip.

That Shakspeare, in return, contributed, more than any other poet, to enrich and modulate his native language, is now freely admitted; but that he was held in similar estimation by his contemporaries, and even at an early period of his poetical progress, may be inferred from what Markham has said of the "poets of his age" in 1595, when Shakspeare had published some of his poems, and had produced his Romeo, and from what Meres, in 1598, more specifically applies to our author; the former observing, in the Dedication of his "Gentleman's Academie," with reference to the Booke of St. Albans, originally published in 1486, that "our tong being not of such puritie then, as at this day the Poets of our age have raised it to: of whom, and in whose behalf I wil say thus much, that our nation may only thinke herselfe beholding for the glory and exact compendiousnes of our language;" and the latter expressly terming our poet, from the superiority of his diction and versification, "mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare.—Vol. ix, p. 46.

Reverting to the subject of National Literature, we proceed to notice the progress which History, General, Local, and Personal, may be deemed to have made, during the era to which we are limited.

History appears in every country to have been late in acquiring its best and most legitimate form, and to have been usually preceded by annals or chronicles,

* Wilson's Art of Rhetoric, p. 167, and Chalmers's Apology, p. 160.

which, aspiring to no unity in arrangement, and void of all political or philosophical deduction, were confined to a bare chronological detail of facts. Such was the state of this important branch of literature on the accession of Elizabeth; numerous chroniclers had flourished from Robert of Gloucester to Fabian and Hall, but with little to recommend them, except the minuteness of their register, and the occasional illustrations of manners and customs; and more distinguishable for credulity and prolixity than for any other characteristics.

The chronicle of Holinshed, however, which appeared in 1577, and a second edition in 1587, merits a higher title. It is more full and complete than any of its predecessors. We are much indebted to Reginald Wolfe, the Queen's printer, for stimulating the historian to the undertaking, who was assisted, in his laborious task, by several able coadjutors, and particularly by the Rev. William Harrison, whose Description of England, prefixed to the first volume, is the most interesting and valuable document, as a picture of the country, and of the costume, and mode of living of its inhabitants, which the sixteenth century has produced.

The example of Holinshed was followed, towards the close of our period, by Stowe and Speed, writers more succinct in their narrative, more correct in their style, and more philosophical in their matter. The "History of Great Britain" by Speed, the second edition of which was printed under the author's care in 1620, is, in every respect, a work of very great merit, whether we consider its authorities, or the mode in which it is written. It is in fact a production which may be read with great pleasure and profit at the present day, and makes a nearer approach, than any former chronicle, to the tone of legitimate history.

In the meantime, the more classical form of this branch of literature was making a rapid progress. Numerous attempts were published, partaking of a mixed character, neither assuming the dignity of history, nor descending to the minuteness of the chronicle; Newton's History of the Saracens, and Fulbeck's Account of the Roman Factions, previous to the reign of Augustus, may be mentioned as specimens; but the great historians of this period, who condescended to use their native tongue, were Raleigh, Hayward, Knolles, Bacon, and Daniel, writers who in this province still hold no inferior rank among the classics of their country. The "History of the World," by Sir Walter, exhibits great strength of style, and much solidity of judgment; Hayward's Lives of the three Norman Kings, and of Henry the IV. and Edward the VI., contain many curious facts to which sufficient attention has not yet been paid; his diction is neat and smooth, but he adopts too profusely the classical costume of framing speeches for his principal characters. Knolles's "General History of the Turks" is an elaborate and useful work, and its language is clear, nervous, and often powerfully descriptive. Bacon's Henry the VIIIth betrays too much of the apologist for arbitrary power, but it is otherwise of great value; it is written from original, and now lost, materials, with vigour and philosophical acuteness. But these historians are excelled, in purity of style and perspicuity of narration, by Daniel, whose "History of England," closing with the reign of Edward the Third, is a production which reflects great credit on the age in which it was written.

We must not omit to mention, however, two historians, who, by rejecting their vernacular language, and adopting that of ancient Rome, acquired for a time a more extended celebrity in this department. Buchanan and Camden are, or should be, familiar to all lovers of history and topography. The "*Rerum Scotticarum Historia*" of the first of these historians, and the "*Annales Rerum Anglicanarum et Hibernicarum*" of the second, are productions in deserved estimation; the former for the classical purity and taste exhibited in its composition, the latter for its accuracy and impartiality.

Of that highly and useful branch of History which is included under the title of Voyages and Travels, the era of which we are treating affords a most abundant harvest. The two great collectors, Hakluyt and Purchas, appear within its

range, compilers, whose industry and research need fear no rivalry. Hakluyt's first collection was published in a small volume in 1582; was increased to a folio in 1589, and to three volumes of the same size in 1598, containing upwards of two hundred voyages. The still more ample work of Purchas was commenced in 1613, by the publication of the first volume folio, with the title of "Purchas, his Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World, and the Religions observed in all Ages and Places discovered, from the Creation unto this present; in four parts." This elaborate undertaking was greatly augmented in subsequent editions, of which the fourth and best was published in 1626, in five volumes folio, the last four being entitled "Hakluytus Posthumous, or Purchas, his Pilgrims; containing a history of the world, in sea-voyages, and land-travels, by Englishmen and others." Purchas professes to include, in this immense compilation, the substance of above twelve hundred authors; it contains also the maps of Mercator and Hondius, and numerous engravings.

These vast and valuable collections are an honour to the reigns of Elizabeth and James; and notwithstanding the industry and research of the moderns, have not yet been superseded.

To the gigantic labours of these writers, which include almost every previous book on the subject of voyage or travel, may be added the publication of two or three contemporaries of singular or useful notoriety. In 1611, Thomas Coryate printed the most remarkable of his eccentric productions, under the quaint title of "Crudities hastily gobbled up in five Months' Travels, in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia, Helvetia, some parts of High Germany, and the Netherlands." Lond. large 4to. Coryate was a man of consummate vanity, of some learning, but of no judgment. Inflamed with an inextinguishable desire of travelling, he walked over a great part of Europe and Asia, terminating his life "in the midst of his Indian travail," about the year 1617. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the style, and often the matter of his book, which is preceded by nearly sixty copies of what Fuller calls mock-commending verses. "Prince Henry," says the same writer, "allowed him a pension, and kept him for his servant. Sweet-meats and Coriat made up the last course at all Court-entertainments. Indeed, he was the courtier's anvil, to try their witts upon, and sometimes this anvil returned the hammers as hard knocks as it received, his bluntnesse repaying their abusiveness." *

A still greater pedestrian than even Coryate lived, at this time, in the person of William Lithgow, who published his "Travels" in 1614. His peregrinations were extended through Europe, Asia, and Africa, and he declares, at the close of his book, that in his three voyages "his painful feet have traced over (besides passages of seas and rivers) thirty-six thousand and odd miles, which draweth near to twice the circumference of the whole earth." His sufferings, through the tyranny of the Spanish governor of Malaga, who had tortured, robbed, and imprisoned him, excited so much pity and indignation, that, on his arrival in England, he was conveyed to Theobalds on a feather-bed, being unable to stand, that King James might be an eye-witness of "martyred anatomy," as he terms the miserable condition to which his body had been reduced. Lithgow's "Travels" are entertaining, and not ill written, but they abound in the marvellous, and too often excite the smile of incredulity.

The "Itinerary, or Ten Yeares Travell through Germany, Italy, England," etc. a folio volume by Fines Moryson, is a production of a far different cast. Moryson is a sober-minded and veracious traveller, and that part of his book which relates to the manners and customs of England and Scotland is peculiarly useful and interesting. He was a native of Lincolnshire, and fellow of Peter-house, Cambridge. "He began his Travels," relates Fuller, "May the first, 1591, over a great part of Christendome, and no small share of Turkey, even to Jerusalem,

* Fuller's Worthies of England, part iii. p. 31.

and afterwards printed his observations in a large book, which, for the truth thereof, is in good reputation, for of so great a traveller, he had nothing of a traveller in him, as to stretch in his reports. At last he was Secretary to Charles Blunt, deputy of Ireland, saw and wrote the conflicts with, and conquest of Tyrone, a discourse which deserveth credit, because the writer's eye guides his pen, and the privacy of his place acquainted him with many secret passages of importance. He dyed about the year of our Lord 1614." *

In that department of history which may be termed *local*, including topography and antiquities, the latter half of the sixteenth century had many cultivators. "Persons of greatest eminence in this sort of learning under queen Elizabeth," remarks Nicolson, "were Humphrey Lhuyd, John Twyne, William Harrison, and William Camden." † Lhuyd possessed unrivalled celebrity in his day, for Camden calls him "a learned Briton, who, for knowledge in antiquities, was reputed to carry, after a sort, with him, all the credit and honour." He wrote a variety of tracts, among which is a fragment of a Commentary on Britain; a Description of the Island of Mona; a Description of the Coasts of Scotland; a Chorography of England and Wales; and a Translation of Caradoc's History of Wales, subsequently published by Powel, and again by Wynn. Lhuyd practised physic at Denbigh in Wales, and died there about the year 1570. His friend John Twyne, the translator of his *Commentarioli Britannicæ*, under the title of *The Breviary of Britain*, Lond. 1573, has been extolled also both by Lee and Nicolson for his knowledge of the history and antiquities of his country. He died in 1581, leaving behind him two books of Commentaries on British History, ‡ which reached the press in 1590, and various Collectanea relative to the antiquities of Britain.

We must here add to Bishop Nicolson's enumeration the name of William Lambarde, the learned author of "*Archaionomia, sive de priscis Anglorum Legibus*," and of the "*Perambulation of Kent*." This last production, which was printed in 1570, is the prolific parent of our county histories, works which have in our days very rapidly increased, and which exhibit the estimation in which they are held, by the high price annexed to their publication.

Of Harrison's "*Historical Description of the Island of Britain*" we have already taken due notice, and it would be superfluous, in this place, to do more than mention the "*Britannia of Camden*." Proceeding therefore to the reign of James, we have to increase the catalogue with the names of Stowe, Norden, Carew, and Burton. The "*Survey of London*" by Stowe, is one of the most early, valuable, and interesting of our topographical pieces; and on it has been founded the subsequent descriptions of Hatton, Seymour, Maitland, Noorthouck, Pennant, and Malcolm. John Norden is well known to the lovers of topography by his "*Speculum Britannicæ*," which was meant to include the chorography of England, but unfortunately extends no farther than the counties of Middlesex and Hertfordshire. Norden was the projector of those useful works familiarly termed Guides, having written a "*Guide for English Travellers*," and a "*Surveyor's Guide*," both works of singular merit. He died about the year 1625. Richard Carew, the author of the "*Survey of Cornwall*," first printed in 1602, and termed, by Fuller, "the pleasant and faithfull description of Cornwall," was educated at Christ-Church, Oxford, where, at the early age of fourteen, though of three years' standing in the University, "he was called out to dispute extempore, before the Earls of Leicester and Warwick, with the matchless Sir Philip Sidney." § The Cornwall of Carew, though now superseded by the more elaborate history of Dr. Borlase, is a compilation of great merit, and makes a nearer approach than Lambarde's Kent to a perfect model for county topography. Carew died in 1620.

* Fuller's Worthies, part iii. p. 167.

† Historical Library, vol. i. p. 8.

‡ De Rebus Albionicis, Britannicis atque Anglicis Commentariorum, lib. duo. Lond. 1590. 8vo.

§ Fuller's Worthies, part. i. p. 205.

William Burton, the last writer whom we shall mention under this head, though contemporary with Shakspeare for more than forty years, was not an author until six years after the poet's death, when he published his "Description of Leicestershire," folio; a book which, independent of its own utility, had the merit of stimulating Sir William Dugdale to the composition of his admirable "History of Warwickshire." Burton's work was justly considered as carrying forward, on an improved scale, the plan of Lambarde and Carew; it is now, however, thrown into the shade by the most copious, and, in every respect, the most complete county history which this kingdom has hitherto produced, the "Leicestershire" of Mr. Nichols. Burton was the friend of Drayton, and brother to the author of the Anatomy of Melancholy.

The third branch of History, the personal or biographical, cannot boast of any very celebrated cultivator during the period to which we are confined. Many ephemeral sketches, it is true, were given of the naval and military commanders of the day, at a time when enterprise and adventure enjoyed the marked protection of government; but no classical production in biography, properly so called, no enduring specimen of personal history seems to have issued from the press; at least we recollect no example, worth notice, in a separate form; and of the general compilers in this province, we are reduced to mention the names of Fox and Pits. The "Acts and Monuments of the Church," by the first of these writers, commonly called "Fox's Book of Martyrs," is a mixed composition; but as consisting principally of personal detail and anecdote, more peculiarly belonging to the department of biography. The first edition of the "Martyrology" was published in London in 1563, in one thick volume folio, and the fourth in 1583, four years before the death of the author, in two volumes folio. This popular work, which was augmented to three volumes folio in 1632, has undergone numerous editions, and perhaps no book in our language has been more universally read. "It may be regarded," remarks Granger, "as a vast Gothic building: in which some things are superfluous, some irregular, and others manifestly wrong: but which, altogether, infuse a kind of religious reverence; and we stand amazed at the labour, if not at the skill, of the architect. This book was, by order of Queen Elizabeth, placed in the common halls of archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, and heads of colleges; and was long looked upon with a veneration next to the Scriptures themselves." *

John Pits, who died in 1616, was a writer, in not inelegant Latin, of the lives of the Roman Catholic authors of England. His work, which was published after his death, at Paris, in 1619, 4to. is usually known and quoted by the title of "*De illustribus Angliæ scriptoribus.*" He is a bold plagiarist from Bale, partial from religious bigotry, and often inaccurate with regard to facts and dates.

To this summary of historical literature it will be necessary to add a few remarks on the translations which were made, during the era in question, from the Greek and Roman historians, as these would necessarily have much influence on the public taste, and would throw open to Shakspeare, and to those of his contemporaries who could not readily appeal to the originals, many sources of imagery and fable. It appears then, that from the year 1550 to the year 1616, all the great historians of Greece and Rome had been, either wholly or in part, familiarized in our language. That the Grecian classics were translated with any large portion of fidelity and spirit, will not easily be admitted, when we find their sense frequently taken from Latin or French versions; but they still served to stimulate curiosity, and to excite emulation. The two first books of Herodotus, 4to. appeared in 1584; Thucydides from the French of Claude de Seyssel, by Thomas Nicolls, folio, in 1550; a great part of Polybius, by

* Granger's Biographical History of England, 2d edit. 1775. vol. i. p. 222.

Christopher Watson, 8vo. in 1568; Diodorus Siculus, by Thomas Hocker, 4to. in 1569; Appian, 4to. in 1578; Josephus, by Thomas Lodge, folio, in 1602; Ælian, by Abraham Fleming, 4to. in 1576; Herodian, from the Latin version of Politianus, by Nycholas Smyth, 4to. in 1591; and Plutarch's Lives, from the French of Amyot, by Sir Thomas North, folio, in 1579.

The Roman writers were more generally naturalized, without the aid of an intermediate version. Livy and Florus were given to the world by Philemon Holland, folio, in 1600; Tacitus, by Sir Henry Saville and Richard Grenaway, 4to. and folio, in 1591 and 1598; Sallust, by Thomas Paynell, 4to. and by Thomas Heywood, folio, in 1557 and 1608; Suetonius, by Philemon Holland, folio, 1606; Cæsar, by Arthur Golding, 4to., 1565, and by Clement Edmundes, folio, 1600; Justin, by Arthur Golding, 4to., 1564, and by Holland, 1606; Quintus Curtius, by John Brande, 8vo., 1561; Eutropius, by Nic. Haward, 8vo., 1564, and Marcellinus, by P. Holland, folio, 1609.

Such are the chief authors, original and translated, which, in the province of History, general, local and personal, added liberally to the mass of information and utility which was rapidly accumulating throughout the Shakspearean era.

That our great poet amply availed himself of these stores, more particularly in those dramas which are founded on domestic and foreign history, every attentive reader of his works must have adequate proof. Several, indeed, of the writers that we have enumerated, though exclusively belonging to our period, and throwing much light on the manners, customs, and literature of their age, came rather too late for the poet's purpose; but of those who published sufficiently early, he has made the best use. Traces of his footsteps may be discerned in many of the authors that we have mentioned, but his greatest inroads seem to have been made through the compilations of Holinshed and Hakluyt, and through the version of Plutarch by North. All that was necessary in the minutiae of fact, was derivable from the labours of the faithful Holinshed; much illustration was to be acquired from the manners-painting pen of Harrison; a knowledge of the globe and its marvels, was attainable in the narratives of Hakluyt; and the character and costume of Greece and Rome were vividly delineated in the delightful, though translated, pages of Plutarch. From these sources, and from a few which existed previous to the commencement of the poet's age, such as the Froissard of Lord Berners, and the Chronicle of Hall, were drawn and coloured those exquisite pictures of manners, history, and individual character, which fix and enrapture attention throughout the dramatic annals of Shakspeare. Indeed, from whatever mine the poet procured his ore, he uniformly purified it into metal of the finest lustre, and it may truly be added, that on the study of the "Histories" of Shakspeare, a more intimate acquaintance with human nature may be founded, than on any other basis.

Whilst on the subject of History, we must deviate in a slight degree from our plan, which excludes the detail of science, to notice two works in Natural History, from which our bard has derived various touches of imagery and description; I mean the Roman and the Gothic Pliny, rendered familiar to our author by the labours of Holland and Batman; the former having published his Translation of Pliny's immense collection in 1601, folio, and the latter his Commentary upon Bartholome, under the title of "Batman upon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum," in 1582, folio. "Shakspeare," says Mr. Douce, speaking of Batman's Bartholome, "was extremely well acquainted with this work;" an assertion which he has sufficiently established in the course of his "Illustrations."* Few, indeed, were the popular books of his

* As Batman's Bartholome, continues Mr Douce, "is likely hereafter to form an article in a Shakspearean Library, it may be worth adding that in a private diary written at the time the original price of the volume appears to have been eight shillings."—*Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 9. I have lately seen a copy of Batman, marked, in a Sale Catalogue, at three guineas and a half!

day, to which our author had not access, and from which he has not derived some slight fact or hint conducive to his purpose.

We now approach the last branch of our present subject, *Miscellaneous Literature*; a topic which, were we not restricted by various other demands, might occupy a volume; for in no era of our annals have miscellaneous writers been more abundant than during the reign of Elizabeth.

A set of men at this time infested the town, in a high degree dissipated in their manners, licentious in their morals, and vindictive in their resentments, yet possessing a large share of native and acquired talent. These adventurers, who hung loose upon society, appear to have seized upon the press for the purpose of indulging an unbounded love of ridicule and raillery, sometimes excited by the mere spirit of badinage and frolic, more frequently stimulated by malignity and revenge, and often goaded to the task by the pressure of deserved poverty. The fertility of these writers is astonishing; the public was absolutely deluged with their productions, which proved incidentally useful, however, in their day, by the exposure of folly, and are valuable, at this time, for the illustrations which they have thrown upon the most evanescent portion of our manners and customs.

Another description of miscellaneous authors, consisted of those who, attached to the discipline of the puritans, employed their pens in inveighing with great bitterness against the dress and amusements of the less rigid part of the community; and a third, equally distant from the levity of the first, and the severity of the second, class, was occupied in calmly discussing the various topics which morals, taste, and literature supplied.

As examples of the first species, no age can produce more extraordinary characters than Nash, Decker, and Greene; men intimately acquainted with all the crimes, follies, and debaucheries of a town-life, indefatigable as writers, and possessing the advantages of learning and genius. Thomas Nash, whose character as a satirist and critic we have already given, in a quotation from Dr. Lodge, died about the year 1600, after a life spent in controversy and dissipation. He had humour, wit, and learning, but debased by a plentiful portion of scurrility and buffoonery; he was born at Lowestoffe in Suffolk, educated at Cambridge, where he resided as a Member of St. John's College, nearly seven years, and obtained great celebrity, as the confuter and silencer of the puritanical Mar-prelates, a service that merited the reputation which it procured him. He was the boon companion of Robert Greene, whose vices he shared, and with whom he acted as the unrelenting scourge of the Harveys.

This terror of his opponents, this Aretine of England, though most remarkable for his numerous prose pamphlets, was also a dramatic poet. His productions, as enumerated by Mr. Beloe, amount to five and twenty.

Thomas Decker, an author still more prolific, began his career as a dramatic poet about the year 1597, and as a prose writer in 1603. His plays, now lost, preserved, or written in conjunction with others, amount to twenty-eight; but it is in his capacity as a miscellanist that we have here to notice him.

His tracts, of which thirty have been attributed to him, and near five-and-twenty may be considered as genuine, clearly prove him to have been an acute observer of the fleeting fashions of his age, and a participator in all its follies and vices. His "*Gul's Horne Booke, or Fashions to please all sorts of Guls*," first printed in 1609, exhibits a very curious, minute, and interesting picture of the manners and habits of the middle class of society, and on this account will be hereafter frequently referred to in these pages.* That experience had tutored him in the knaveries of the metropolis, the titles of the following pamphlets will sufficiently evince. "*The Belman of London, bringing to Light the most notorious Villanies that are now practised in the Kingdome*," 1608; one of the earliest books

* We are much obliged to Dr. Nott, for a most elegant reprint of this interesting tract; the accompanying notes are highly valuable and illustrative.

professing to disclose the slang of thieves and vagabonds; and, remarks Warton, from a contemporary writer, the most witty, elegant, and eloquent display of the vices of London then extant. “Lantern and Candle Light: Or, The Bel-Man’s Second Night’s Walke. In which he brings to light a Brood of more strange Villanies than ever were till this Year discovered.” 4to. 1612. “Villanies discovered by Lanthorn and Candle Light, and the Helpe of a new Crier called O-per-se-O. Being an Addition to the Belman’s second Night’s Walke, with canting Songs never before printed.” 4to. 1616. It will occasion no surprise, therefore, if we find this describer of the arts and language of thieving himself in a jail; he was, in fact, confined in the King’s Bench prison from 1613 to 1616, if not longer. The most remarkable transaction of his life appears to have been his quarrel with Ben Jonson, who, no doubt sufficiently provoked, satirizes him in his *Poetaster*, 1601, under the character of Crispinus; a compliment which Decker amply repaid in his “*Satiromastix, or the Untrussing of the humorous Poet*,” 1602, where he lashes Ben without mercy, under the designation of Horace Junior. Jonson replied in an address to the Reader, introduced in the 4to edition of his play, in place of the epilogue, and points to Decker, under the appellation of the “Untrusser.” Decker was an old man in 1631, for in his “*Match me in London*,” published in that year, he says: “I have been a priest in Apollo’s Temple many years, my voice is decaying with my age;” he probably died in 1639, the previous year being the date of his latest production.

Of Robert Greene, the author of near fifty productions,* the history is so highly monitory and interesting as to demand more than a cursory notice. It affords, indeed, one of the most melancholy proofs of learning, taste, and genius being totally inadequate, without a due control over the passions, to produce either happiness or respectability. This misguided man was born at Norwich, about the middle of the sixteenth century, of parents in genteel life and much esteemed. He was sent to St. John’s College, Cambridge, from whence, at an early period of his education, he was, unfortunately for his future peace of mind, induced to absent himself, on a tour through Italy and Spain. His companions were wild and dissolute, and, according to his own confession,† he ran headlong with them into every species of dissipation and vice.

On his return to England, he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts at St. John’s, in 1578, and afterwards, removing to Clare-hall, his Master of Arts degree in that college, 1583. We learn, from one of his numerous tracts, that, immediately after this event, he visited the metropolis, where he led a life of unrestrained debauchery. Greene was one of those men who are perpetually sinning and perpetually repenting; he had a large share of wit, humour, fancy, generosity, and good-nature, but was totally deficient in that strength of mind which is necessary to resist temptation; he was conscious, too, of his great abilities, but at the same time deeply conscious of the waste of talent which had been committed to his care. When we find, therefore, that he was intended for the church, and that he was actually presented to the vicarage of Tollesbury, in Essex, on the 19th of June, 1584, we may easily conceive how a man of his temperament and habits would feel and act; he resigned it, in fact, the following year, no doubt shocked at the disparity between his profession and his conduct; for we find, from his own relation, that a few years previous to this incident, he had felt extreme compunction on hearing a sermon “preached by a godly learned man,” in St. Andrew’s Church, Norwich.

It was shortly after this period that he married; and, if any thing could have saved Greene from himself, this was the expedient; for the lady he had chosen

* For a catalogue of these, as far as they have hitherto been discovered, we refer the reader to Mr. Beloe’s *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. ii., and to *Censura Literaria*, vol. viii.

† In his pamphlet, entitled *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, he informs us, that “wags as lewd” as himself “drew him to march into Italy and Spaine,” where he “saw and practised such villanie as is abominable to declare.”

was beautiful in her person, amiable and moral in her character, and we know, from the works of this unhappy man, that his heart had been the seat of the milder virtues, and that he possessed a strong relish for domestic life.

The result of the experiment must lacerate the feelings of all who hear it; for it exhibits, in a manner never surpassed, the best emotions of our nature withering before the touch of Dissipation. The picture is taken from a pamphlet of our author's, entitled "Never Too Late," printed in 1590, where his career is admirably and confessedly shadowed forth under the character of the Palmer Francesco. It would appear from this striking narrative, if the minutiae, as well as the outline of it, are applicable to Greene, that he married his wife contrary to the wishes of her father; their pecuniary distress was great, but prudence and affection enabled them to realize the following scene of domestic felicity:—

"Hee and Isabel joyntly together taking them to a little cottage, began to be as Ciceronicall as they were amorous; with their hands thrift coveting to satisfy their hearts thirst, and to be as diligent in labours, as they were affectionate in loves; so that the parish wherein they lived, so affected them for the course of their life, that they were counted the very mirrors of methode; for he being a scholer, and nurst up in the universities, resolved rather to live by his wit, than any way to be pinched with want, thinking this old sentence to be true, "the wishers and woulders were never good householders;" therewith he applied himselfe in teaching of a schoole, where, by his industry, hee had not onely great favour, but gate wealth to withstand fortune. Isabel, that shee might seeme no less profitable, then her husband carefull, fell to her needle, and with her worke sought to prevent the injurie of necessitie. Thus they laboured to maintain their loves, being as busie as bees, and as true as turtles, as desirous to satisfie the world with their desert, as to feede the humours of their own desires. Living thus in a league of united virtues, out of this mutuall concord of conformed perfection, they had a sonne answerable to their owne proportion, which did increase their amitie, so as the sight of their young infant was a double ratifying of their affection. Fortune and love thus joyning in the league, to make these parties to forget the stormes, that had nipped the blossom of their former yeres. *

The poetry of Greene abounds still more than the prose with the most exquisite delineations of rural peace and content, and the following lines feelingly paint this short and only happy period of his life:—

"Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content,
The quiet minde is richer than a crowne:
Sweete are the nights in carelesse slumber spent,
The poor estate scornes Fortune's angry frowne:
Such sweete content, such minde, such sleepe, such blis,
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft doe mis.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest,
The cottage that affoords no pride nor care,
The meane that greees with country musicke best,
The sweete consort of mirth and musick's fare,
Obscured life sets downe a type of blis,
A minde content both crowne and kingdome is. †

Deeply is it to be lamented, and with a sense, too, of humiliation for the frailty of human nature, that, with such inducements to a moral and rational life, with sufficient to support existence comfortably, for he had some property of his own, and his wife's dowry had been paid,‡ and with a child whom he loved, and with a wife whom he confesses was endowed with all that could endear and dignify her sex, he could suffer his passions so far to subdue his reason, as to throw these essentials towards happiness away! In the year 1586 he abandoned this amiable woman and her son, to revel in all the vicious indulgences of the metropolis. The causes of this iniquitous desertion may be traced in his works; from these we learn that, in the first place, she had endeavoured, and perhaps

* *Censura Literaria*, vol. viii. p. 11, 12.

† From Greene's Farewell to Follie. Vide Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. vi. p. 7.

‡ We learn these circumstances—his having squandered his paternal inheritance and his marriage portion—from his two tracts, "Never Too Late," and "Repentance," where all the prominent events of his life are detailed.

too importunately for such an irritable character, to reform his evil propensities ; * and secondly that on a visit to London on business, he had been fascinated by the allurements of a courtesan, † and on this woman, whose name was Ball, and on her infamous relations, for her brother was afterwards hanged, ‡ he squandered both his own property and that of his wife.

It is almost without a parallel that during the remainder of Greene's life, including only six years, he was continually groaning with anguish and repentance, and continually plunging into fresh guilt ; that in his various tracts he was confessing his sins with the deepest contrition, passionately apostrophising his injured wife, imploring her forgiveness in the most pathetic terms, and describing, in language the most touching and impressive, the virtue of her whom he had so basely abandoned.

He tells us, under the beautifully drawn character of Isabel, by whom he represents his wife, that upon her being told, by one of his friends, of his intended residence in London, and by another, of the attachment which had fixed him there, she would not at first credit the tale ; but, when convinced, she hid her face, and inwardly smothered her sorrows, yet grieving at his follies, though unwilling to hear him censured by others, and at length endeavouring to solace her affliction by repeating to her cittern some applicable verses from the Italian of Ariosto. He then adds, that she subsequently hinted her knowledge of the amour to him in a letter, saying “ the onely comfort that I have in thine absence is the child, who lies on his mother's knee, and smiles as wantonly as his father when he was a wooer. But, when the boy says, ‘Mam, where is my dad, when wil he come home ;’ then the calm of my content turneth to a present storm of piercing sorrow, that I am forced sometime to say, ‘ unkinde Francesco that forgets his Isabell.’ I hope Francesco it is thine affaires, not my faults, that procure this long delay.” §

The following pathetic song seems to have been suggested to Greene by the scene just described, and is a further proof of the singular disparity subsisting between his conduct and his feelings.—

“ BY A MOTHER TO HER INFANT.

WEEPE not, my Wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old theres grieve enough for thee.

Mothers wagge, prettie boy,
Fathers sorrow, fathers joy ;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe,
Fortune changd made him so,
When he had left his prettie boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weepe not, my Wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old theres grieve enough for thee.

Streaming teares that never stint,
Like pearle drops from a flint,
Fell by course from his eies,
That one anothers place supplies.

Thus he grieved in every part,
Teares of bloud fell from his heart,
When he left his prettie boy,
Fathers sorrow, fathers joy.

Weep not, my Wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old theres grieve enough for thee.

The wanton smilde, father wept,
Mother cried, babie lept ;
Now he crow'd more he cride,
Nature could not sorrow hide ;
He must goe, he must kisse
Childe and mother, babie blisse,
For he left his prettie boy,
Fathers sorrow, fathers joy.

Weep not, my Wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old theres grieve enough for thee”**

In the mean time he pursued his career of debauchery in Town, whilst his forsaken wife retired into Lincolnshire. In July, 1588, he was incorporated at Oxford, at which time, says Wood, he was “ a pastoral sonnet maker, and author of several things which were pleasing to men and women of his time: they made much sport, and were valued among scholars.” †† In short, such had been the

* Oldys says, that “ he left his wife, for her good advice, in the year 1586.” Berkenhout's *Biographia Literaria*, p. 390. note d.

† See *Censura Literaria*, vol. viii. p. 13.

‡ Berkenhout, p. 390. note d.

§ “ Never Too Late.” See *Censura Literaria*, vol. viii. p. 15.

** Greene's *Arcadia*, 1587.

†† *Biographia Literaria*. p. 289.

extravagance of Greene, that he was now compelled to write for his daily support, and his biographers, probably without any sufficient foundation, have chosen to consider him as the first of our poets who wrote for bread. It should be recorded, however, that his pen was employed not only for himself but for his wife; for Wood tells us, and it is a mitigating fact which has been strangely overlooked by every other writer, that he "wrote to maintain his wife, and that high and loose course of living which poets generally follow."* We have reason, indeed, to conclude, that the income which he derived from his literary labours was considerable, for his popularity as a writer of prose pamphlets, which, as Warton observes, may "claim the appellation of satires," was unrivalled. Ben Jonson alludes to them in his "Every Man out of his Humour,"† and Sir Thomas Overbury, describing a chamber-maid, says "she reads Greene's works over and over; but is so carried away with the Mirror of Knighthood, she is many times resolv'd to run out of herself, and become a lady-errant."‡

It must be confessed that many of the prose tracts of Greene are licentious and indecent; but there are many also whose object is useful and whose moral is pure. They are written with great vivacity, several are remarkable for the most poignant raillery, all exhibit a glowing warmth of indignation, and many are interspersed with beautiful and highly polished specimens of his poetical powers. On those which are employed in exposing the machinations of his infamous associates, he seems to place a high value, justly considering their detection as an essential service done to his country; and he fervently thanks his God for enabling him so successfully to lay open the "most horrible Coosenages of the common Cony-Catchers; Cooseners and Crosse Biters," names which in those days designated the perpetrators of every species of deception and knavery.§

But the most curious and interesting of his numerous pieces, are those which relate to his own character, conduct, and repentance. The titles of these, as they best unfold the laudable views with which they were written, we shall give at length.

1. Greene's Mourning Garment, given him by Repentance at the Funerals of Love, which he presents for a Favour to all young Gentlemen that wishe to weane themselves from wanton desires. Both pleasant and profitable. By R. Greene, *Utriusque Academiae in Artibus Magister. Sero sed serio.* Lond. 1590.

2. Greene's Never Too Late. Sent to all youthful Gentlemen, decyphering in a true English Historie those particular vanities, that with their frosty vapours nip the Blossomes of every Braine from attaining to his intended perfection. As pleasant as profitable, being a right Pumice Stone, apt to race out Idlenesse with delight, and folly with admonition. By Robert Greene, *In Artibus Magister.* Lond. 1590.

3. Greene's Groatsworth of Wit. Bought with a million of Repentance, describing the Folly of Youth, the Falshood of make-shift Flatteries, the Miserie of the Negligent, and Mishaps of deceiving Courtezans. Published at his dying Request, and newly corrected and of many errors purged. *Felicem fuisse infaustum.* Lond. 1592.

4. Greene's Farewell to Follie. Sent to Courtiers and Scholers, as a President to warne them from the vain Delights that drawe Youth on to Repentance. *Sero sed serio.* By Robert Greene.

5. Repentance of Robert Greene, Maister of Artes. Wherein, by himselfe, is laid open his loose Life, with the Manner of his Death. Lond. 1592.

* *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. i. col. 136.

† *Act ii. sc. 3.*

‡ *Vide New and choice Characters of severall Authors, together with that exquisite and unmatched poeme, The Wife; written by Syr Thomas Overburie. Lond. 1615.*

§ His "trifling pamphlets of Love," as he himself terms them (see *Repentance of Robert Greene*), we shall not notice; but there are two, under the titles of "Penelope's Webb," and "Ciceronis Amor," which deserve mention, as exhibiting many excellent precepts and examples for the youth of both sexes.

6. Greene's Vision. Written at the instant of his death, conteyning a penitent Passion for the folly of his Pen. Sero sed serio. By Robert Greene.

In these publications the author has endeavoured to make all the reparation in his power, by exposing his own weakness and folly, by detailing the melancholy effects of his dissipation, and by painting in the most impressive terms the contrition which he so bitterly felt. In what exquisite poetry he could deplore his vicious habits, and by what admirable precepts he could direct the conduct of others, will be learnt from two extracts taken from his "Never Too Late," in the first of which the Penitent Palmer, the intended symbol of himself, repeats the following ode :

" Whilome in the Winter's rage,
A Palmer old and full of age,
Sate and thought upon his youth,
With eyes, teares, and hart's ruth,
Beeing all with cares yblent,
When he thought on yeeres mispent,
When his follies came to minde,
How fond love had made him blinde,
And wrapt him in a field of woes,
Shadowed with pleasures shoes,
Then he sighed, and sayd, alas!
Man is sinne, and flesh is grasse.
I thought my mistres hairs were gold,
And in her locks my harte I folde;
Her amber tresses were the sight
That wrapped me in vaine delight:
Her ivorie front, her pretie chin,

Were stales that drew me on to sin:
Her starry lookes, her christall eyes,
Brighter than the sunnes arise:
Sparkling pleasing flames of fire,
Yoakt my thoughts and my desire,
That I gan cry ere I blin,
Oh her eyes are paths to sin.
Her face was faire, her breath was sweet,
All her lookes for love was meete:
But love is folly this I know,
And beauty fadeth like to snow.
Oh why should man delight in pride,
Whose blossome like a dew doth glide:
When these supposes taught my thought,
That world was vaine, and beautie nought,
I gan to sigh, and say, alas!
Man is sinne, and flesh is grasse." *

The second extract, entitled the Farewell of a friend, is supposed to be addressed to Francesco the Palmer, "by one of his companions;" such an one, indeed, as might have saved him from ruin, had he sought for the original in real life.

" Let God's worship be thy morning's worke, and his wisdom the direction of thy dayes labour.

" Rise not without thanks, nor sleepe not without repentance.

" Choose but a few friends, and try those; for the flatterer speakes fairest.

" If thy wife be wise, make her thy secretary; else looke thy thoughts in thy heart, for women are seldome silent.

" If she be faire, be not jealous; for suspicion cures not womens follies.

" If she be wise, wrong her not; for if thou lovest others she will loath thee.

" Let thy children's nurture be their richest portion: for wisdom is more precious than wealth.

" Be not proude among thy poor neighbours; for a poore man's hate is perillous.

" Nor too familiar with great men; for presumption winnes disdaine." †

The virtues of Greene were, it is to be apprehended, confined to his books; they were theoretical rather than practical; for, however sincere might be his repentance at the moment, or determined his resolution of reform, the impression seems to have been altogether transient; he continued to indulge, with few interruptions, his vicious course, until a death, too accordant with the dissipated tissue of his life, closed the melancholy scene. He died, says Wood, about 1592, of a surfeit taken by eating pickled herrings and drinking Rhenish wine. It appears that his friend Nash was of the party.

Of the debauchery, poverty, and misery of Greene, Gabriel Harvey, with whom he had carried on a bitter personal controversy, has left us a highly-coloured description. If the last scene of his life be not exaggerated by this inveterate opponent, it presents with a picture of distress the most poignant and pathetic upon record.

* Vide Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature, vol. vi. p. 9.

† Never Too Late, part ii. See Censura Literaria, vol. viii. p. 135, 136.

"I once bemoned," relates Harvey, "the decayed and blasted estate of M. Gascoigne, who wanted not some commendable parts of conceit, and endeavour: but unhappy M. Gascoigne, how lordly happy, in comparison of most unhappy M. Greene? He never envyed me so much as I pitied him from my hart; especially when his hostesse Isam, with teares in her eies, and sighes from a deeper fountaine (for she loved him deerely) tould me of his lamentable begging of a penny pott of Malmesie;—and how he was faine, poore soule, to borrowe her husbands shirte, whiles his owne was a washing; and how his dublet, and hose, and sworde were sold for three shillings: and beside the charges of his winding sheete, which was four shillings, and the charges of his buriall yesterday in the New-church-yard neere Bedlam, which was six shillings and foure pence; how deeply hee was indebted to her poore husbände: as appeered by hys owne bonde of tenne poundes: which the good woman kindly shewed me: and beseeched me to read the writing beneath: which was a letter to his abandoned wife, in the behalfe of his gentle host: not so short as persuasible in the beginning, and pitifull in the ending.

DOLL, I charge thee by the love of our youth, and by my soules rest, that thou wilt see this man paide: for if hee and his wife had not succoured me, I had died in the streetes.

ROBERT GREENE.*

The pity which Harvey assumes upon this occasion may justly be considered as hypocritical; for the pamphlet whence the above extract has been taken, abounds in the most rancorous abuse and exaggerated description of the vices of Greene, and contains, among other invectives, a sonnet unparalleled, perhaps, for the keen severity of its irony, and for the dreadful solemnity of tone in which it is delivered. It is put into the mouth of John Harvey, the physician, who had been dead some years, but who had largely participated of the torrent of satire which Greene had poured upon his brothers Gabriel and Richard. If it be the composition of Gabriel, and there is reason to suppose this to be the case, from the tract in which it appears, it must be deemed infinitely snperior, in point of poetical merit, to any thing else which he has written.

JOHN HARVEY THE PHYSICIAN'S WELCOME TO ROBERT GREENE!

"Come, fellow Greene, come to thy gaping grave,
 Bid Vanity and Foolery farewell,
 That overlong hast plaid the mad-brained knave,
 And overloud hast rung the bawdy bell.
 Vermine to vermine must repair at last;
 No fitter house for busie folke to dwell;
 Thy conny-catching pageants are past,
 Some other must those arrant stories tell:
 These hungry wormes thinke long for their repast;
 Come on; I pardon thy offence to me;
 It was thy living; be not so aghast!
 A Fool and a Physitian may agree!
 And for my brothers never vex thyself;
 They are not to disease a buried else."†

We have entered thus fully into the character and writings of Greene, from the circumstance of his having been the most popular miscellaneous author of his day, from the striking talent and genius which his productions display, and from the moral lesson to be drawn from his conduct and his sufferings. It may be useful to remark here, that a well chosen selection from his pamphlets, now all extremely rare, would furnish one of the most elegant and interesting volumes in the language.‡

Of the next class of miscellaneous writers, those derived from that part of the community which adhered to the tenets and discipline of the Puritans, and who employed their pens chiefly in satirizing their less enthusiastic neighbours, it will

* Four Letters and Certaine Sonnets. Especially touching Robert Greene, and other Poets by him abused. Lond. 1592 Vide Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 201, 202.

† Vide D'Israeli's Calamities of Authors, vol. ii. p. 17, 18.

‡ This article has been chiefly drawn up from documents afforded by Wood, Berkenhout, Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature, D'Israeli, and the Censura Literaria. The extracts selected from his pamphlets, by Mr. Beloe, in the opening of his sixth volume, will enable the reader to form a pretty good estimate of the poetical genius of Greene.

be sufficient to notice two, who have attracted a more than common share of attention, as well for the rancour of their animadversion, as for their rooted antipathy to the stage. The first of these, Stephen Gosson, was educated at Christ Church, Oxford; on leaving the University, he went to London, where he commenced poet and dramatist, and, according to Wood, "for his admirable penning of partorals, was ranked with Sir P. Sidney, Tho. Chaloner, Edm. Spencer, Abrah. Fraunce, and Rich. Bernfield." * His dramatic writings, which consist of a tragedy, founded on Cataline's conspiracy, a comedy, and a morality, were never printed. Of his devotion to the Muses, however, he soon after heartily repented, as of a most heinous sin; for, imbibing the sour severity of the Puritans, he left the metropolis, became tutor in a gentleman's family, in the country, and subsequently took orders, declaiming in a style so vehement against the amusements of his early days, as to acquire a great share of popular notoriety. The work by which he is best known is entitled "The Schoole of Abuse. Conteyning a pleasaunt Invective against Poets, Plaiers, Jesters, and such like Caterpillers of a Comonwelth; setting up the Flagg of Defiance to their mischievous exercise, and overthrowing their Bulwarkes by prophane Writers, naturall Reason, and common experience. A discourse as pleasaunt for Gentlemen that favour learning, as profitable for all that wyl follow vertue. By Stephen Gosson, Stud. Oxon." London, 1597. This was speedily followed by another attack in a pamphlet, termed "Playes confuted in five Actions, etc. Proving that they are not to be suffred in a christian commonweale, etc.;" † a philippic which he dedicated to Sir Francis Walsingham, as he had done his Schoole to Sir Philip Sidney; both of whom considered the liberty which he had taken, rather in the light of an insult than a compliment.

The warfare of Gosson, however, was mildness itself, compared with that which Philip Stubbes carried on against the same host of poetical sinners. This puritanical zealot, whose work we have repeatedly quoted, commenced his attack upon the public in the year 1583, by publishing in small 8vo. the first edition of his "Anatomie of Abuses:" containning a discoverie, or briefe sumarie of such notable vices and imperfections as now rayne in many Christian Countreyes of the Worlde: but (especiallie) in a verie famous Ilande called Ailgna: etc." A second impression, which now lies before me, was printed in 1595, 4to. and both it and the octavo are among the scarcest of Elizabethan books. "Stubbes," remarks Mr. Dibdin, "did what he could, in his Anatomy of Abuses, to disturb every social and harmless amusement of the age. He was the forerunner of that snarling satirist, Prynne; but I ought not thus to cuff him, for fear of bringing upon me the united indignation of a host of black-letter critics and philologists. A large and clean copy of his sorrily printed work, is among the choicest treasures of a Shakspearean virtuoso." He subjoins, in a note, commencing in the true spirit of bibliomania, that "Sir John Hawkins calls this 'a curious and very scarce book;' and so does my friend, Mr. Utterson; who revels in his morocco-coated copy of it—'Exemplar olim Farmerianum!'" Then proceeding more soberly, he adds, "Let us be candid, and not sacrifice our better judgments to our book-passions. After all, Stubbes's work is a caricatured drawing. It has strong passages, and a few original thoughts; and is, moreover, one of the very few works printed in days of yore, which have running titles to the subjects discussed in them. These may be recommendations with the bibliomaniac: but he should be informed that this volume contains a great deal of puritanical cant, and licentious language: that vices are magnified in it in order to be lashed, and virtues diminished that they might not be noticed. Stubbes equals Prynne in his anathemas against Plays and Interludes; and in his chapters upon 'Dress' and 'Dancing,' he rakes together every coarse and pungent phrase in order to describe 'these horrible sins' with due severity. He is sometimes so indecent, that, for the credit of the age and of a virgin reign, we must hope that every virtuous dame threw

* Wood's *Athenæ Oxon.* vol. i.

† Warton's *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 288. note t.

the copy of his book, which came into her possession behind the fire. This may reasonably account for its present rarity."*

Of the tone in which Stubbes's book is written no inaccurate judgment may be formed from the various passages which we have already quoted; but the following short extract will more fully develop, perhaps, the acrimony of his pen than any paragraph that has yet been brought forward. He is speaking of the neglect, of Fox's Book of Martyrs, "whilst other toyes, fantasies and bableries," he adds, "wherof the world is ful, are suffered to be printed. Then prophane schedules, sacriligious libels, and hethnical pamphlets of toyes and bableries (the authors whereof may vendicate to themselves no smal commendations, at the hands of the devil for inventing the same) corrupt men's mindes, pervert good wits, allure to baudrie, induce to whordome, suppress virtue and erect vice: which thing how should it be otherwise? for are they not invended and excogitat by Belzebub, written by Lucifer, licensed by Pluto, printed by Cerberus, and set a broche to sale by the infernal furies themselves to the poysoning of the whole worlde."†

The works of Gosson and Stubbes are now chiefly valuable for the numerous illustrations which they incidentally give of the manners, customs, dress and diversions, of their age, and especially for the light which they throw on the character and costume of the stage.

The progress of discussion has at length brought us to the third class of Miscellaneous Writers, who may be considered as possessing a more decorous and philosophic cast in composition than the authors who have just fallen beneath our notice. The individuals of this genus, too, are numerous, but we shall content ourselves with the mention of three, who were more than usually popular in their day, Thomas Lodge, Abraham Fleming, and Gervase Markham. Lodge was educated at Oxford, which he entered about 1573; he took his degree of Doctor of Medicine at Avignon, and practised as a physician in London, where he died in 1625. He was a dramatic poet as well as a miscellaneous writer, and was considered by his contemporaries as a man of uncommon genius. He appears to have been, not only a scholar, but a man of the world, to have possessed no small share of wit and humour, and to have uniformly wielded his pen in support of morality and good order. Of his pieces no doubt many have perished; in his professional capacity, only one remains, a "Treatise on the Plague; but the productions which acquired him most celebrity were written to expose the follies and vices of the times, and of these, about half a dozen are preserved. He is now best known by his "Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse. Discovering the Devils incarnate of this Age. Lond. 1596:" a tract which, although so extremely rare as to be in the possession of only one or two collectors, has been frequently quoted, owing to its containing some interesting notices of contemporary writers. The principal faults in the literary character of Lodge seem to have been a love of quaintness and affectation; the very titles of his pamphlets indicate the former; the alliteration in the one just transcribed is notorious, and another is termed "Catharos. Diogenes in his Singularitie. Wherein is comprehended his merrie baighting fit for all men's benefits: Christened by him, A Nettle for Nice Noses, 1591." From a passage in "The Returne from Pernassus" it is evident that he was thought to be deeply tainted with Euphuism, the literary folly of his time. The poet is speaking of Lodge and Watson both, he says,

— "subject to a crittick's marginall,
Lodge for his oare in every paper boate,
He that turnes over Galen every day,
To sit and simper Euphue's legacy."‡

Abraham Fleming, the corrector and enlarger of the second edition of Holinshed's Chronicle in 1585, was prodigiously fertile, both as an original writer and

* Dibdin's Bibliomania, p. 366.

† Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 49.

‡ Anatomie of Abuses, sig. P, p. 7.

a translator. In the latter capacity he gave versions of the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgil, both in rhyme of fourteen feet, 1575, and in the regular Alexandrine without rhyme, 1589; of Ælian's *Various History* in 1576; of *Select Epistles* of Cicero, 1576, and in the same year, a "Panoplie of Epistles from Tully Isocrates, Pliny, and others; of the Greek Panegyric of Synesius, and of various Latin works of the fifteenth century. As an original miscellaneous writer, his pieces are still more numerous, and, for the most part, occupied by moral and religious subjects; for example, one is called "The Cundyt of Comfort," 1579; a second, "The Battel between the Virtues and Vices," 1582, and a third "The Diamond of Devotion," 1586. This last is so singularly quaint both in its title-page and divisions, so superior, indeed, in these departments, to the titles of his contemporary Lodge, and so indicative of the curious taste of the times in the methodical arrangement of literary matter, as to call for a further description. The complete title runs thus: "The Diamond of Devotion: Cut and squared into sixe severall pointes: namelie, 1. The Footepath of Felicitie. 2. A Guide to Godlines. 3. The Schoole of Skill. 4. A Swarme of Bees. 5. A Plant of Pleasure. 6. A Grove of Graces. Full of manie fruitfull lessons availeable unto the leading of a godlie and reformed life." The "Footepath of Felicitie" has ten divisions, concluding with a "looking glasse for the Christian reader; the "Guide to Godlines," is divided into three branches, and these branches into so many blossoms; the first branch containing four blossoms, the second thirteen, and the third ten; the "Schoole of Skill" is digested into three sententious sequences of the A. B. C.; the "Swarme of Bees" is distributed into ten honeycombs, including two hundred lessons; the "Plant of Pleasure" bears fourteen several flowers, in prose and verse; the "Grove of Graces" exhibits forty-two plants, or Graces, for dinner and supper, and the volume concludes with "a brieife praier."

From the specimens which we have seen of Fleming's composition, it would appear, that his affectation was principally confined to his title pages and divisions: for his prose is more easy, natural, and perspicuous, than most of his contemporaries. He was rector of Saint Pancras, Soper-lane, and died in 1607.*

Gervase Markham, whom we have incidentally mentioned in various parts of this work, was the most indefatigable writer of his era. He was descended of an ancient family in Nottinghamshire, and commenced author about the year 1592. The period of his death is not ascertained; but he must have attained a good old age, for he fought for Charles the First, and obtained a Captain's commission in his army. His education had been very liberal, for he was esteemed a good classical scholar, and he was well versed in the French, Italian, and Spanish languages. As he was a younger son, it is probable that his finances were very limited, and that he had recourse to his pen as an additional means of support. "He seems," remarks Sir Egerton Brydges, "to have become a general compiler for the booksellers, and his various works had as numerous impressions as those of Burn and Buchan in our days." † No subject, indeed, appears to have been rejected by Markham; husbandry, huswifry, farriery, horsemanship, and military tactics, hunting, hawking, fowling, fishing, and archery, heraldry, poetry, romances, and the drama: all shared his attention and exercised his genius and industry.‡

* For catalogues of Fleming's Works, see Herbert's *Typographical Antiquities*; Warton's *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 402 ad 405. Tanner's *Bibliotheca*, p. 237, 238, and *Censura Literaria*, No. viii. p. 313, et seq.

† *Censura Literaria*, vol. ii. p. 218.

‡ As no complete catalogue of this ingenious author's productions is to be found in any one writer, I have thought it desirable to endeavour to form one, noticing only the first editions, when ascertained, and referring, for the full titles, to the works cited at the close of this note.

1. A Discourse of Horsemanshippe, 4to. 1593.—2. Thyrsys and Daphne, 1593.—3. The Gentleman's Academie, or Booke of St. Albans, 4to. 1595.—4. The poem of poems, or Sions muse, contayning the divine song of king Salomon, devided into eight eclogues, 8vo. 1595.—5. The most honourable tragedie of Sir Richard Grenvill, knight, a heroick poem, in eight-line stanzas, 8vo. 1595.—6. Devoreux. Vertues tears for the losse of the most christian king Henry, third of that name, king of Fraunce: and the untimely death of the most noble and heroicall gentleman, Walter Devoreux, &c., 4to. 1597.—7. Ariosto's Rogero and Rodomantho, &c. paraphrastically translated. 1598.—8. The Teares of the beloved, or the Lamentation

His popularity, in short, in all these various branches was unrivalled; and such was his reputation as a cattle doctor, that the booksellers, aware of the value of his works in this kind of circulation, got him to sign a paper in 1617, in which he bound himself not to publish any thing further on the diseases of "horse, ox, cowe, sheepe, swine, goates, etc." His books on agriculture were not superseded until the middle of the eighteenth century, and the fifteenth impression of his "Cheap and Good Husbandry," which was originally published in 1616, is now before us, dated 1695. Nor were his works on rural amusements less relished; for his "Country Contentments," the first edition of which appeared in 1615, had reached the eleventh in 1675. The same good fortune attended him even as a poet, for in "England's Parnassus, 1600, he is quoted thirty-four times, forming the largest number of extracts taken from any minor bard in the book. He appears to have been an enthusiast in all that relates to field-sports, and his works, now becoming scarce, are, in many respects, curious and interesting, and display great versatility of talent. By far the greater part of them, as is evident from their dates, was written before the year 1620, though many were subsequently corrected and enlarged.

Having thus given a sketch of three great classes of miscellaneous writers, it will be necessary to add some notice of a few circumstances which more peculiarly distinguished this branch of literature during the life-time of our poet.

It is to the reign of Elizabeth, that we have to ascribe the origin of genuine printed Newspapers, a mode of publication which has now become absolutely essential to the wants of civilised life. The epoch of the Spanish invasion forms that of this interesting innovation, for, previous to the daring attempt of Spain, all public news had been circulated in manuscript, and it was left to the sagacity of Elizabeth and the legislative prudence of Burleigh to discover, how highly useful, in this agitated crisis, would be a more rapid circulation of events, through the medium of the press. Accordingly, in April, 1588, when the formidable Armada approached the shores of old England, appeared the first number of "The English Mercury." That it was published very frequently, is evident from the circumstance that No. 50, the earliest number now preserved, and which is in the British Museum, Sloane MSS., No. 4106, is dated the 23d of July, 1588. It resembles the London Gazette of the present day, with respect to the nature of its articles, one of which presents us with this curious information:—"Yesterday the Scotch Ambassador had a private audience of Her Majesty, and delivered a letter from the King his master, containing the most cordial assurances of adhering to Her Majesty's interests, and to those of the protestant religion; and the young King said to Her Majesty's minister at his court, that all the favour he expected from the Spaniards was, the courtesy of Polyphemus to Ulysses, that he should be devoured the last."*

tion of Saint John, &c. 4to. 1600.—9. Cavalerice, or the English Horseman, 4to. 1607.—10. England's Arcadia, alluding his beginning from Sir Philip Sydney's ending, 4to. 1607.—11. Ariosto's Satyres, 4to. 1608.—12. The Famous Whore, or Noble Courtezian, 4to. 1609.—13. Cure of all diseases, incident to Horses, 4to. 1610.—14. The English Husbandman in two parts, 1613.—15. The Art of Husbandry, first translated from the Latin of Cour Heresbachiso, by Barnaby Googe, 4to. 1614.—16. Country Contentments, or the Husbandman's Recreations, 4to. 1615.—17. The English Huswife, 4to. 1615.—18. Cheap and Good Husbandry, 4to. 1616.—19. Liebault's Le Maison Rustique, or the Country Farm, folio. 1616.—The English Horseman, 4to. 1617.—(8. How To Chuse, Ride, Traîne. And Diet Both Hunting Horses And Running Horses, 1599.)—22. The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent, 4to.—23. Markham's Farewel to Husbandry, 4to. 1620.—24. The Art of Fowling, 8vo. 1621.—25. Herod and Antipater, a Tragedy, 4to. 1622.—26. The Whole Art of Husbandry, contained in Four Bookes, 4to. 1631.—27. The Art of Archerie, 8vo. 1634.—28. The Faithful Farrier, 8vo. 1635.—29. The Soldiers Exercise, 3d edit. 1643.—30. The Way to Get Wealth, 4to. 1638.—31. The English Farrier, 4to. 1649.—32. Epitome concerning the Diseases of Beasts and Poultry, 8vo.—34. His Masterpiece, concerning curing of Cattle, 4to. an edition 1662.—(10. Marie Magdalen's Lamentations, 4to. 1601.)

Numerous editions of many of these works, with alterations in the title-pages, were published to the year 1700. See *Censura Literaria*, vol. ii. p. 217—225. Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 273, 274. Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 244, et seq. and vol. ii. p. 339. Bridges's *Theatrum Poetarum*, p. 278—285. *Biographia Dramatica*. British Bibliographer, No. iv. p. 380, 381. Warton's *Hist. of Engl. Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 485.

* See Chalmers's *Life of Ruddiman*, 8vo. p. 106. Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. iv. p. 34, and Andrew's *History of Great Britain*, vol. i. p. 145, 156.

So rapid was the progress of newspapers after this memorable introduction, that towards the close of the reign of James, Ben Jonson, in his "Staple of News," alludes to them, as fashionable among all ranks of people, and as sought after with the utmost avidity, one consequence of which was, that the greater part of what was communicated was fabricated on the spot. To this grievance the poet refers in an address to his readers, where, speaking of spurious news, he calls it "news made like the Times news (a weekly cheat to draw money), and could not be fitter reprehended, than in raising this ridiculous office of the Staple, wherein the age may see her own folly, or hunger and thirst after published pamphlets of news, set out every Saturday, but made all at home, and no syllable of truth in them." Act. ii.

Another branch of miscellaneous literature which may be said to have originated at this period, was that employed in the writing of Characters; a species of composition which, if well executed, necessarily throws much light on the manners and customs of its age.

A claim to the first legitimate collection of this kind, may be allotted, on the authority of Fuller, to Sir Thomas Overbury; "he was," says that entertaining compiler, "the first writer of Characters of our nation, so far as I have observed." * With the exception of two small tracts, descriptive of the characters of rogues and knaves, † this assertion appears to be correct. Few works have been more popular than Overbury's volume; it was printed several times, according to Wood, before the author's death in 1613; but the earliest edition now usually met with is dated 1614, and is, with great probability, supposed to be the fifth impression, for the sixth, which is not uncommon, was published the subsequent year. Various alterations took place in the title-page of this miscellany, but that of 1614 is as follows:—A Wife now the Widdow of Sir Thomas Overbury. Being a most exquisite and singular Poem of the Choice of a Wife. Whereunto are added many witty Characters and conceited Newes, written by himselfe and other learned Gentlemen his friends.

"Dignum laude virum musa vetat mori,
Cælo musa beat.

Hor. Car. lib. iii.

London, Printed for Lawrence Lisle, and are to bee sold at his shop in Paule's Church-yard, at the signe of the Tiger's head. 1614, 4to." ‡ The characters in this edition amount to twenty-two, but were augmented in the eleventh, printed in 1622, to eighty. So extensive was the sale of this collection, that the sixteenth impression appeared in 1638.

Both the poem and the characters exhibit no small share of talent and discrimination. In Overbury's Wife, observes Mr. Neve, "the sentiments, maxims, and observations with which it abounds, are such as a considerable experience and a correct judgment on mankind alone could furnish. The topics of jealousy, and of the credit and behaviour of women, are treated with great truth, delicacy and perspicuity. The nice distinctions of moral character, and the pattern of female excellence here drawn, contrasted as they were with the heinous and flagrant enormities of the Countess of Essex, rendered this poem extremely popular, when its ingenious author was no more." § The prose characters, though rather too antithetical in their style, are drawn with a masterly hand, and are evidently the result of personal observation.

Numerous imitations of both were soon brought forward; in 1614 appeared "The Hushand. A poeme expressed in a compleat man;" small 8vo: and in 1616, "A select Second Husband for Sir Thomas Overburie's Wife; now a

* Fuller's Worthies, p. 359.

† "The Fraternitie of Uagabondes," 1565, and "A Caveat for common Cursetors vulgarely called Uagabones, set forth by Thomas Herman, Esq." 1567.

‡ Three editions were probably published in 1614; for Mr. Capel, in his Prolusions, 8vo, notices one in 8vo, and one in 4to, stated in the title-page to be the fourth. Vide Bliss's edition, of the Microcosmography, p. 258, and Censura Literaria, vol. v. p. 363.

§ Cursory Remarks on Ancient English Poets, 1789. p. 27, et seq.

matchlesse Widow:" small 8vo; which were followed by many others. The prose characters established a still more durable precedent, for they continued to form a favourite mode of composition for better than a century. Of these the most immediate offspring were, "Satyrical Characters" by John Stephens, 8vo, 1615, and "The Good and the Badde, or Description of the Worthies and Unworthies of this Age. Where the Best may see their Graces, and the Worst discerne their Basenesse," by Nicholas Breton, 4to. 1616. Perhaps the most valuable collection of characters previous to the year 1700, is that published by Bishop Earle, in 1628, under the title of *Microcosmography*, and which may be considered as a pretty faithful delineation of many classes of characters as they existed during the close of the sixteenth, and commencement of the seventeenth, century.*

One of the earliest attempts at miscellaneous Essay-writing, since become a most fashionable and popular species of literary composition, may likewise very justly be ascribed to a similar epoch. In 1601, Thomas Wright published in small octavo a collection of Essays, on various subjects, which he entitled "The Passions of the Minde." This volume, consisting of 336 pages independent of the preface, was re-issued from the press in 1604, enlarged by nearly as much more matter, and in quarto form; and a third edition in the same size appeared in 1621.

The work is divided into six books, and, from the specimens which we have seen, is undoubtedly the production of a practised pen and discerning mind. It is termed by Mr. Haslewood,

"An amusing and instructive collection of philosophical essays, upon the customary pursuits of the mind;" and he adds, "though a relaxation of manners succeeded the gloomy history of the cowl, and the abolishing of the dark cells of superstition; it was long before the moralist ventured to draw either example or precept from any other source than Scripture and the writings of the fathers. Genius run riot in some instances from excess of liberty, but the calm, rational, and universal essayist was a character unknown. In the present work there are passages that possess no inconsiderable portion of ease, spirit, and freedom, diversified with character and anecdote that prove the author mingled with the world to advantage; and could occasionally lighten the hereditary shackles that burthened the moral and philosophical writer."†

It is, however, to the profound genius of Lord Bacon that we must attribute the earliest legitimate specimen of essay-writing in this country; for though his "Essays on Councils, Civil and Moral," were not completed until 1612, the first part of them was printed in 1597; and in the intended dedication to Prince Henry of this second edition, he assigns his reason for adopting the term essay. "To write just treatises," he observes, "requires leisure in the writer, and leisure in the reader, and therefore are not so fit, neither in your Highness's princely affairs, nor in regard of my continual service, which is the cause that hath made me chuse to write certain brief notes, set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called Essays. The word is late, but the thing is ancient; for Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius, if you mark them well, are but essays, that is, dispersed meditations, though conveyed in the form of epistles."‡ This invaluable work, in a moral and prudential light, perhaps the most useful which any English author has left to posterity, has been the fruitful parent of a more extensive series of similar productions, collectively or periodically published, than any other country can exhibit.

The age of Shakspeare was fertile, also, in what may be termed Parlour-window Miscellanies; books whose aim was to attract the attention of the idle, the dissipated, and the gossiping, by intermingling with the admonitions of the sage a more than usual share of wit, narrative, and anecdote. Two of these, as exemplars of the whole class, it may be necessary to notice. In 1589, Leonard Wright published "A Display of dutie, deckt with sage sayings, pythie sentences, and pro-

* For an accurate Catalogue of the various Writers of Characters to the year 1700, consult Bliss's edition of Earle's *Microcosmography*, 1811.

† *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 168.

‡ Bacon's Works, 1740, vol. iv. p. 586.

per similies : Pleasant to reade, delightfull to heare, and profitable to practise ;” a collection which Mr. Haslewood calls “ an early and pleasing specimen” of this species of miscellaneous writing. It contains observations and friendly hints on all the principal circumstances and events of life ; “ certaine necessarie rules both pleasant and profitable for preventing of sicknesse, and preserving of health : rescribed by Dr. Dyet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman ;” and concludes with “ certaine pretty notes and pleasant conceits, delightful to many, and hurtfull to none.” The author closes

“ A friendly advertisement touching marriage,” by enumerating the infelicities of the man who marries a shrew, where “ hee shall finde compact in a little flesh, a great number of bones too hard to digest.—And therefore,” adds he, “ some do thinke wedlocke to be that same purgatorie, which some learned divines have so long contended about, or a sharp penance to bring sinnefull men to heaven. A merry fellow hearing a preacher say in his sermon, that whosoever would be saved, must take up and beare his cross, ran straight to his wife, and cast her upon his back.

“ Finally, he that will live quiet in wedlocke, must be courteous in speech, cheareful in countenance, provident for his house, carefull to traine up his children in vertue, and patient in bearing the infirmities of his wife. Let all the keyes hang at her girdle, only the purse at his own. He must also be voide of jelsie, which is a vanity to thinke, and more folly to suspect. For eyther it needeth not, or booteth not, and to be jelious without a cause is the next way to have a cause.

“ This is the only way, to make a woman dum :

To sit and smyle and laugh her out, and not a word, but mum.” *

In 1600, appeared the first edition of “ The Golden-grove, moralized in three books : A worke very necessary for all such as would know how to governe themselves, their houses, or their countrey. Made by W. Vaughan, Master of Artes, and Graduate in the Civill Law.” A second edition, “ reviewed and enlarged by the Authour,” was printed in 1608.

Each book of this work, which displays considerable knowledge both of literature and of mankind, is divided, after a ridiculous fashion of the time, into plants, and these again into chapters. The first book, on the Supreme Being, and on man, contains eleven plants, and eighty-four chapters ; the second, on domestic and private duties, five plants, and thirty chapters ; and the third, upon the commonwealth, nine plants and seventy-two chapters.

Great extent of reading, and much ingenuity in application, are discoverable in the *Golden Grove*, accompanied by many curious tales, and local anecdotes. It is one of the books, also, which has thrown light upon the manners and diversions of its age, and will hereafter be quoted on this account. Vaughan, though he professes himself attached to poetry from his earliest days, and has devoted a chapter to its praise, was too much of the puritan to tolerate the stage, against which he inveighs with more acrimony than discrimination. The passages which allude to our old English poets, we shall throw together, as a specimen of his style and composition.

“ Jeffery Chaucer, the English poet, was in great account with King Richard the Second, who gave him in reward of his poems, the mannour of Newelme in Oxfordshire.—King Henry the eighth, her late Maiesties father, for a few psalms of David turned into English meeter by Sternhold, made him groome of his privie chamber, and rewarded him with many great giftes besides. Moreover, hee made Sir Thomas More Lord Chauncelour of this realme, whose poeticall workes are as yet in great regarde.—Queene Elizabeth made Doctour Haddon, beyng a poet, Master of the Requests.—Neither is our owne age altogether to be disprayed. Sir Philip Sydney excelled all our English poets, in rareness of stile and matter. King James, our dread Sovereigne, that now raigneth, is a notable poet, and hath lately set out most learned poems, to the admiration of all his subjects.

“ Gladly I could go forward in this subject, which in my stripling yeeres pleased me beyond all others, were it not I delight to bee briefe : and that Sir Philip Sydney hath so sufficiently defended it in his Apology of Poetry ; and if I should proceede further in the commendation thereof, whatsoever I write would be eclipsed with the glory of his golden eloquence. Wherefore, I stay my selfe

* British Bibliographer, No. VI. p. 49, 51.

in this place, earnestly beeseching all gentlemen, of what qualitie soever they bee, to advaunce poetrie, or at least to admire it, and not bee so hastie shamefully to abuse that, which they may honestly and lawfully obtayne." *

We shall conclude these observations on the miscellaneous literature of Shakspeare's time, by noticing one of the earliest of our Facetiæ, the production of an author who may be termed, in allusion to this jeu d'esprit, the Rabelais of England. Had the subject of this satire been less exceptionable in its nature, the popularity which it acquired for a season might have been permanent; but its grossness is such as not to admit of adequate atonement by any portion of wit, however poignant. It is entitled "A New Discourse of a Stale Subject, called the Metamorphosis of Ajax. Written by Misacmos to his friend and cosin Philostilpnos," London, 1596, and is said to have originated from the author's invention of a water-closet for his house at Kelkston. † The conceit, or pun upon the word Ajax, or a *jakes*, appears to have been a familiar joke of the time, and had been previously introduced by Shakspeare in his *Love's Labour's Lost*, when Costard tells Sir Nathaniel, the Curate, on his failure in the character of Alexander, "you will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this: your lion, that holds his poll-ax sitting on a close-stool, will be given to A-jax: he will be the ninth worthy." Act v. sc. 2. A similar allusion is to be found in Camden and Ben Jonson.

The Metamorphosis, for which Sir John published a witty apology, under the appellation of "An Anatomie of the Metamorphosed Ajax," abounds with humour and sarcastic satire, and is valuable as an illustration of the domestic manners of the age. Either from its indecency, however, or its severity upon her courtiers, the facetious author incurred the displeasure of Elizabeth, and was banished for some time from her presence. It is probably to the latter cause that his exile is to be attributed; for in a letter addressed to the knight by his friend, Mr. Robert Markham, and dated 1598, he says:—

"Since your departure from hence, you have been spoke of, and with no ill will, both by the nobles and the Queene herself. Your book is almoste forgiven, and I may say forgotten; but not for its lack of wit or satyr. Those whome you feared moste are now bosoming themselves in the Queene's grace; and tho' her Highnesse signified displeasure in outwarde sorte, yet did she like the marrowe of your booke. Your great enemye, Sir James, did once mention the Star-Chamber, but your good esteeme in better mindes outdid his endeavours, and all is silente again. The Queen is minded to take you to her favour, but she sweareth that she believes you will make epigrams and write *misacmos* again on her and all the courte; she hath been heard to say, 'that merry poet, her godson, must not come to Greenwich, till he hath grown sober, and leaveth the ladies sportes and frolicks.' She did conceive much disquiet on being tolde you had aimed a shafte at Leicester." ‡

The genius of Harrington was destined to revive, with additional vigour, in the person of Swift, who, to an equal share of physical impurity, united a richer and more fertile vein of coarse humour and caustic satire.

That Shakspeare was well acquainted with the various works which we have noticed in this class of literature, and probably with most of their authors, there is much reason to infer. We have already found § that he was justly offended with Robert Green, for the notice which he was pleased to take of him in his "Groat's Worth of Witte bought with a Million of Repentance," and there can be no doubt that the philippics of Gosson and Stubbes, being pointedly directed against the stage, would excite his curiosity, and occasionally rouse his indignation. The very popular satires also of Nash and Decker must necessarily have attracted his notice, nor could a mind so excursive as his, have neglected to cull from the varied store which the numerous miscellanies, characters, and essays of the age presented to his view. It can

* British Bibliographer, No. VIII. p. 272.

‡ *Idem*, vol. i. p. 239, 240.

† *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. xi. edit. 1804.

§ Part II. chap. 1.

be no difficult task to conceive the delight, and the mental profit, which a genius such as Shakspeare's, of which one characteristic is its fertility in aphoristic precept, must have derived from the study of Lord Bacon's Essay! The apothegmatic treasures of Shakspeare have been lately condensed into a single volume by the judgment and industry of Mr. Lofft, and it may be safely affirmed, that no uninspired works, either in our own or any other language, can be produced, however bulky or voluminous, which contain a richer mine of preceptive wisdom than may be found in those two books of the philosopher and the poet, the *Essays of Bacon*, and the *Aphorisms of Shakspeare*.

CHAPTER III.

View of Romantic Literature during the Age of Shakspeare—Shakspeare's Attachment to, and Use of, Romances, Tales, and Ballads.

THAT a considerable, and perhaps the greater, portion of Shakspeare's Library consisted of Romances and Tales, we have already mentioned as a conclusion fully warranted, from the extensive use which he has made of them in his dramatic works. What the precious tomes specifically were which covered his shelves, we have now no means of positively ascertaining; but it is evident that we shall make a near approximation to the truth, if we can bring forward the library of a contemporary collector of romantic literature, and at the same time contemporary authority for the romances then most in vogue.

Now it fortunately happens, that we have not only a few curious descriptions, by the most unexceptionable authors of the reigns of Elizabeth and James, of the popular reading of their day, but we possess also a catalogue of the collection of one of the most enthusiastic hoarders of the sixteenth century, in the various branches of romantic lore; a document which may be considered, in fact, as placing within our view a kind of fac-simile of this, the most copious department of Shakspeare's book boudoir.

The interesting detail has been given us by Laneham, in his "Account of the Queen's Entertainment at Killingworth Castle, 1575." The author is describing the Storial Show by a procession of the Coventry men, in celebration of Hock Tuesday, when he suddenly exclaims,—“But aware, keep bak, make room noow, heer they cum.

“And fyrst Captain Cox, an old man I promiz yoo; by profession a Mason, and that right skilfull; very cunning in fens, and hardy az Gavin; for his ton-sword hangs at hiz tablz eend; great oversight hath he in matters of storie: For az for King Arthurz book, Huon of Burdeaus, the four sons of Aymon, Bevy's of Hampton, The Squire of lo degree, The Knight of Courtesy, and the Lady Faguell, Frederick of Gene, Syr Eglamoour, Syr Tryamoour, Syr Lamwell, Syr Isenbras, Syr Gawyn, Olyver of the Castl, Lucres and Curialus, Virgil's Life, the Castl of Ladiez, the Wido Edyth, the King and the Tanner, Frier Rous, Howlegias, Gargantua, Robinhood, Adam Bel, Clim of the Clough and William of Cloudsley, the Churl and the Burd, the Seven Wise Masters, the Wife lapt in a Morels Skin, the Sak full of Nuez, the Seargeaunt that became a Fryar, Skogan, Collyn Clout, the Fryar and the Boy, Elynor Rumming, and the Nutbrooun Maid, with many moe then I rehearz heere; I believe hee have them all at his fingers endz.

“Then in Philosophy, both morall and naturall, I think hee be az naturally overseen; beside Poetrie and Astronomie, and oother hid Sciencez, az I may gesse by the omberty of his books; whearof part, az I remember, The Shepherdz Kalender, The Ship of Foolz, Danielz Dreamz, the Booke of Fortune, Stans puer ad Mensam, The by way to the Spittl-house, Julian of Brain-

ord's Testament, the Castle of Love, the Boogiet of Demaunds, the Hundred Mery Talez, the Book of Riddels, the Seaven Sororz of Wemen, the prooud Wives Pater Noster, the Chapman of a Peneworth of Wit: Beside his Auncient Playz, Yooth and Charitee, Hikskorner, Nugizee, Impacient Poverty, and herewith Doctor Boords Breviary of Health. What should I rehearz heer, what a bunch of Ballets and Songs, all auncient; as Broom broom on Hill, So Wo iz me begon, trolly lo, Over a Whinny Meg, Hey ding a ding, Bony lass upon a green, My hony on gave me a bek, By a bank as I lay: and a hundred more he hath fair wrapt up in parchment, and bound with a whip cord. And az for Almanacks of Antiquitee (a point for Ephemeridees), I ween he can sheaw from Jazper Laet of Antwarp unto Nostradam of Frauns, and thens unto oour John Securiz of Salsbury. To stay yee no longer heerein, I dare say hee hath az fair a Library for theez Scienceez, and az many goodly monuments both in prose and poetry, and at after noonz can can talk az much without book, az ony inholder betwixt Brainford and Bagshot, what degree soever he be." *

Of the library of this military bibliomaniac, who is represented as "marching on valiantly before, clean trust and gartered above the knee, all fresh in a velvet cap, flourishing with his *ton* sword," Mr. Dibdin has appreciated the value when he declares, that he should have preferred it to the extensive collection of the once celebrated magician, Dr. Dee. "How many," he observes, "of Dee's magical books he had exchanged for the pleasanter magic of Old Ballads and Romances, I will not take upon me to say: but that this said bibliomaniacal Captain had a library, which, even from Mr. Laneham's imperfect description of it, I should have preferred to the four thousand volumes of Dr. John Dee, is most unquestionable."

He then adds in a note, in reference to the "Bunch of Ballads and Songs, all auncient:—fair wrapt up in parchment, and bound with a whip cord!" "it is no wonder that Ritson, in the historical essay prefixed to his collection of Scottish Songs, should speak of some of these ballads with a zest, as if he would have sacrificed half his library to untie the said 'whip cord' packet. And equally joyous, I ween, would my friend Mr. R. H. Evans, of Pall-Mall, have been—during his editorial labors in publishing a new edition of his father's collection of Ballads—(an edition, by the by, which gives us more of the genuine spirit of the Coxean Collection than any with which I am acquainted)—equally joyous would Mr. Evans have been, to have had the inspection of some of these 'bonny' songs. The late Duke of Roxburghe, of never-dying bibliomanical celebrity, would have parted with half the insignia of his order of the Garter, to have obtained clean original copies of these fascinating effusions!" †

Though the Romances and Ballads in Captain Cox's Library are truly termed "ancient," yet it appears, from unquestionable contemporary authority, that these romances, either in their original dress or somewhat modernised, were still sung to the harp, in Shakspeare's days, as well in the halls of the nobility and gentry, as in the streets and ale-houses, for the recreation of the multitude: thus Puttenham, in his "Arte of English Poesie," published in 1589, speaking of historical poetry adapted to the voice, says,

"We our selves who compiled this treatise have written for pleasure a little brief Romance or historicall ditty in the English tong of the Isle of Great Britaine in short and long meetres, and by breaches or divisions to be more commodiously song to the harpe in places of assembly, where the company shal be desirous to heare of old adventures and reliaunces of noble knights in times past, as are those of King Arthur and his knights of the round table, Sir Bevys of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke and others like;" and he afterwards notices the "blind harpers or such like taverne minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a groat, their matters being for the most part stories of old time, as the tale of Sir Topaz, the reportes of Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, Adam Bell, and Clymme of the Clough, and such other old Romances or historicall rimes, made purposely for recreation of the common people at Christmasse diners and bride ales, and in tavernes and ale-houses, and such other places of base resort." ‡

Bishop Hall, likewise, in his Satires printed in 1598, alluding to the tales that lay

"In chimney-corners smok'd with winter fires,
To read and rock asleep our drowsy sires,"

* Nichols's Progresses, vol. i. Laneham's Letter, p. 34—36.

† Dibdin's Bibliographical Romance, p. 349, 350, and note

‡ Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie, reprint of 1811, p. 33, 69.

exclaims,—

“ No man his threshold better knowes, than I
Brute's first arrival, and first victory;
St. George's sorrel, or his crosse of blood,
Arthur's round board, or Caledonian wood,
Or holy battles of bold Charlemaine,
What were his knights did Salem's siege maintaine:
How the mad rival of faire Angélice
Was physick'd from the new-found paradise! *

and even so late as Burton, who finished his interesting work just previous to our great poet's decease, we have sufficient testimony that the major part of our gentry was employed in the perusal of these seductive narratives: “ If they read a book at any time,” remarks this eccentric writer, “ 'tis an English Chronicle, Sr. Huon of Bordeaux, Amadis de Gaul, etc.; and subsequently, in depicting the inamoratoes of the day, he accuses them of “reading nothing but play books, idle poems, jests, Amadis de Gaul, the Knight of the Sun, the Seven Champions, Palmerin de Oliva, Huon of Bordeaux, etc.” †

These contemporary authorities prove, to a certain extent, what were considered the most popular romances in the reigns of Elizabeth and James; but it will be satisfactory to enquire a little more minutely into this branch of literature.

The origin of the metrical Romance may be traced to the fostering influence of our early Norman monarchs, who cultivated with great ardour the French language; and it was from the courts of these sovereigns that the French themselves derived the first romances in their own tongue. ‡ The gratification resulting from the recital or chaunting of these metrical tales was then confined, and continued to be for some centuries, to the mansions of the great, owing to the vast expense of maintaining or rewarding the minstrels with whom, at that time, a knowledge of these splendid fictions exclusively rested. No sooner, however, was the art of printing discovered, than the wonders of romance were thrown open to the eager curiosity of the public, and the presses of Caxton and Winkin de Worde groaned under the production of prose versions from the romantic poesy of the Anglo-Norman bards.

So fascinating were the wild incidents and machinery of these volumes, and so rapid was their consequent circulation, that neither the varied learning nor the theological polemics of the succeeding age, availed to interrupt their progress; and it was not until towards the close of the seventeenth century, that the feats of the knight and the spells of the enchanter ceased to astonish and exhilarate the halls of our fathers.

In the whole course of this extensive career, from the era of the conquest to the age of Milton, a poet whose youth, as he himself tells us, was nourished “among those lofty fables and romances, which recount, in sublime cantos, the deeds of knighthood,” perhaps no period can be mentioned in which a greater love of romantic fiction existed, than that which marks the reign of Elizabeth; and this, too, notwithstanding the improvement of taste, and the progress of classical learning; for though the national credulity had been chastened by the gradual efforts of reason and science, yet was the daring imagery of romance still the favourite resource of the bard and the novelist, who, skilfully blending its potent magic with the colder but now fashionable fictions of pagan antiquity, flung increasing splendour over the union, and gave that permanency of attraction which only the peculiar and unfettered genius of the Elizabethan era could bestow.

Confining ourselves at present, however, chiefly to the consideration of the prose romance, we may observe, that five distinct classes of it were prevalent in the age of Shakspeare, which we may designate by the appellations of Anglo-Norman, Oriental, Italian, Spanish, and Pastoral Romance.

* Chalmer's English Poets, vol. v. p. 283, col. 2.

† Anatomy of Melancholy, 8th edit. p. 84, 177.

‡ See Ellis's Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, vol. i. Introduction, p. 38; and the Abbé de la Rue's Dissertations on the Anglo-Norman poets, Archæologia, vol. xii. and xiii.

Under the first of these titles, the Anglo-Norman, we include all those productions which have been formed on the metrical romances of the feudal or Anglo-Norman period, and to which the terms Gothic or Chivalric have been commonly, though not exclusively, applied. These are blended not only with much classical fiction, but with a large portion of oriental fable, derived from our commerce with the East during the period of the Crusades, and are principally occupied either in relating the achievements of Arthur, Charlemagne, and the knights engaged in the holy wars, or in chivalarising, if we may use the word, the heroes of antiquity, or in expanding the wonders of oriental machinery.

The most popular prose romance of this class was undoubtedly "*La Morte d'Arthur*," translated from various French romances by Sir Thomas Malory, and printed by Caxton in 1485, a work which includes in a condensed form the most celebrated achievements of the knights of the Round Table.* This "noble and joyous book," as it is termed by its venerable printer, was the delight of our ancestors until the age of Charles the First; and in no period more decidedly so than in the reign of Elizabeth, when probably there were few lordly mansions without a copy of this seducing tome, either in the great hall or in the ladies bower. Such were its fascinations, indeed, as to excite the apprehensions, and call forth the indignant and somewhat puritanical strictures of Ascham and Meres; the former in his "*Schoole Master*," 1571, when, reprobating the inordinate attachment to books of chivalry, instancing, as one for example, *Morte Arthur*, the whole pleasure of which booke," he says, "standeth in two specyall poyntes, in open mans slaughter and bolde bawdrie: in which booke, those be counted the noblest knights that doe kill most men without any quarrell, and commit fowlest adoultries by sutlest shifts; as, Syr Lancelote with the wife of King Arthure, his maister; Syr Tristram with the wife of King Marke, his uncle: Syr Lameroche with the wife of King Lote, that was his own aunte. This is good stuffe for wise men to laughe at, or honest men to take pleasure at. Yet I knowe when God's Bible was banished the court and *Morte Arthure* receaved into the princes chamber, what toyes the dayly reading of such a booke may worke in the will of a yong gentleman, or a yong maide that liveth welthely and idly, wise men can judge, and honest men do pittie;"† and the latter declaring in his "*Wits' Commonwealth*," that "as the Lord de la Nonne in the sixe discourse of his politike and military discourses censureth of the bookes of *Amadis de Gaule*, which he saith are no less hurtfull to youth, than the workes of Machiavell to age; so these bookes are accordingly to be censured of, whose names follow; *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwicke*, *Arthur of the Round Table*, etc."

That these strictures are too severe, and that the consequences apprehended by these ingenious scholars did not necessarily follow, we have the authority of Milton to prove; who, so far from deprecating the study of romances as dangerous to morality, declares "that even those books proved to me so many enticements to the love and stedfast observation of virtue;"‡ a passage which appears to have kindled in the mind of a modern writer, a spirited defence of the utility of these productions, even at the present day.

"There is yet a point of view," he remarks, "in which Romance may be regarded to advantage, even in the present age. The most interesting qualities in a chivalrous knight, are his high-toned enthusiasm, and disinterested spirit of adventure—qualities to which, when properly modified and directed, society owes its highest improvements. Such are the feelings of benevolent genius yearning to diffuse love and peace and happiness among the human race. The gorgeous visions of imagination, familiar to the enthusiastic soul, purify the heart from selfish pollutions, and animate to great and beneficent actions. Indeed, nothing great or eminently beneficial ever

* The title of this first edition, as gathered from the prologue and colophon, has been thus given by Mr. Dibdin:—"A BOOK OF THE NOBLE HYSTORYES OF KYNGE ARTHUR, and of certeyn of his knyghtes. Whiche book was reduced in to englyshe by syr Thomas Malory knyght and by me devyded into XXI bookes chapytred and enprynted, and fynnysshed in the abbey Westmestre the last day of July the yere of our lord M.cccc.lxxxv. folio."—Dibdin's *Typographical Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 241.

† Ascham's *Works*, Bennet's edit. p. 254.

‡ Toland's *Life of Milton*, p. 35.

has been or can be effected without enthusiasm—without feelings more exalted than the consideration of simple matter of fact can produce. That Romances have a tendency to excite the enthusiastic spirit, we have the evidence of fact in numerous instances. Hereafter, we shall hear the great Milton indirectly bearing his testimony of admiration and gratitude for their inspiring influence. It is of little consequence, comparatively speaking, whether all the impressions made, be founded on strict philosophical truth. If the imagination be awakened and the heart warmed, we need give ourselves little concern about the final result. The first object is to elicit power. Without power nothing can be accomplished. Should the heroic spirit chance to be excited by reading Romances, we have, alas! too much occasion for that spirit even in modern times, to wish to repress its generation. Since the Gallic hero has cast his malign aspect over the nations, it is become almost as necessary to social security, as during the barbarism of the feudal times. There is now little danger of its being directed to an *unintelligible* purpose.

“Romances, then, not only merit attention, as enabling us to enter into the feelings and sentiments of our ancestors,—a circumstance in itself curious, and even necessary to a complete knowledge of the history of past ages; they may still be successfully employed to awaken the mind—to inspire genius: and when this effect is produced, the power thus created may be easily made to bear on any point desired.”*

The demand for *Morte Arthur*, which continued for nearly two centuries, produced of course several re-impressions: the second issued from the press of Winkin de Worde in 1498, the colophon of which, as specified by Herbert, is singularly curious.

“Here is the ende of the hoole boke of kynge Arthur, and of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table. That whane they were hoole togyder, there was ever an c. and xi. And here is the ende of the deth of Arthur. I praye you all gentylmen and gentylwymmen that rede thys boke of Arthur and his knyghtes from the beginnyng to the endyng praye for me whyle I am a lyue, that God send me good utterance. And when I am deed, I pray you all pray for my soule: for the translacion of this boke was fynisshed the ix. yere of the regne of kyng Edward the fourth, by syr Thomas Maleore knyght, as Jhesu helpe him for his grete myghte, as he is the servaunt of Jhesu bothe day and nyghte. Emprynted fyrst by William Caxton, on whose soul God have mercy.”†

The re-impression of De Worde was followed by the editions of Copland, East, and William Stansby, this last being dated 1634. Of the elder copies East's was probably the one most generally used in the reign of Elizabeth, and it differs only in a few unessential phrases from the edition of Caxton.

La Morte d'Arthur, which, by its frequent republication, kept alive a taste for romantic fiction, may be considered as giving us, with a few exceptions as to costume, a very pleasing though somewhat polished picture of the chivalric romance of the Anglo-Norman period. It has the merit also of furnishing an excellent specimen of purity and simplicity in style and diction; qualities which have stamped upon many of its otherwise extravagant details the most decided features of sublimity and pathos. A passage in the twenty-second chapter of the second book, for example, furnishes a noble instance of the former, and the speech of Sir Bohort, over the dead body of Sir Launcelot, towards the close of the work, is as admirable a specimen of the latter. These, as short, peculiarly interesting, and characteristic of the work, we shall venture to transcribe.

The description of, and the effect arising from so simple a circumstance as that of blowing a horn, are thus painted:—

“So hee rode forth, and within three days hee came by a cross, and thereon was letters of gold written, that said, It is not for a knight alone to ride toward this castle. Then saw hee an old hoar gentleman coming toward him, that said, Balin le Savage, thou passest thy bounds this way, therefore turne againe and it will avail thee. And hee vanished away anon; and so hee heard an horne blow as it had been the death of a beast. That blast, said Balin, is blown for mee; for I am the prize, and yet am I not dead.”

Sir Ector de Maris, the brother of Sir Launcelot, after having sought him in vain through Britain for seven years, has at length the melancholy satisfaction of recognising the body of the hero, who had just breathed his last.

* Burnet's *Specimens of English Prose Writers*, vol. i. p. 287—289.

† Dibdin's *Typographical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 81, 82.

“ And then Sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and his helme from him. And when hee beheld Sir Launcelot’s visage, he fell downe in a sowne. And when hee awaked, it were hard for any tongue to tell the dolefull complaints that he made for his brother. Ah, Sir Launcelot, said hee, thou were head of all christian knights, and now I dare say, said Sir Bors, that Sir Launcelot, there thou liest thou were never matched of none earthly knight’s hands. And thou were the curtiest knight that ever beare shield. And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrod horse, and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou were the kindest man that ever stroke with sword. And thou were the goodliest parson that ever came among presse of knights. And thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eate in hall among ladies. And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortall foe that ever put speare in the rest.”—Book iii. chap. 170.

We have taken the more notice of this work, not only as it affords a pretty correct idea of what the old chivalric metrical romance consisted, but as it was in Shakspeare’s time the favourite book in this branch of literature, and furnished Spenser with many incidents for his “*Faerie Queene*.”* It constitutes, in fact, an exemplar and abridgment of the marvels of the Round Table, such as were dispersed through a variety of metrical tales, and can only be found condensed in this production, and of which the popularity may be considered as an indubitable mark of the taste of the age in which it was so much admired and cherished.

If it be objected, that, though *Morte Arthur* was very popular, it did not originate during our period, it may be answered, that many prose imitations of the Anglo-Norman romance, the undoubted offspring of the Elizabethan era, might, if necessary, be mentioned: but one will suffice, and this has been selected from its having obtained an influence over the public mind nearly as long as the *Death of Arthur*.

We allude to the well-known romance entitled “*The Seven Champions of Christendome*,” written in the age of Elizabeth by Richard Johnson, the author of various other productions during this and the subsequent reign. In what year the first part of the *Seven Champions* made its appearance is not known; but the second was published with the following title and date:—“*The Second Part of the famous History of the Seven Champions of Christendome. Likewise shewing the princely Prowesse of Saint George’s three Sonnes, the lively Sparke of Nobilitie. With many memoriall atchieuements worthy the Golden Spurres of Knighthood. Lond. Printed for Cuthbert Burbie, etc., 1597.*” 4to. Black Letter.† If Mr. Warton’s opinion be correct, that Spenser was indebted to this work for some incidents in the conduct of his *Faerie Queene*, the first part must have been printed before 1590; and Mr. Todd, indeed, seems to think that the second part “was published some time after the first;” a supposition which is corroborated by the address to the reader prefixed to the second part, in which, after mentioning “the great acceptance of his First Part,” he nevertheless deprecates the severity of criticism to which it had been exposed; “thy courtesy,” he says, “must be my buckler against the carping malice of mocking jesters, that being worse able to do well, scoff commonly at that they cannot mend, censuring all things, doing nothing, but, monkey-like, make apish jests at any thing they see in print: and nothing pleaseth them, except it savour of a scoffing or invective spirit;” passages which indicate that the first part of this romance had been for some length of time before the public. We may also add, that Johnson is known to have been a popular writer in 1592, having published in that year his “*Nine Worthies of London*.”

“If we except *La Morte D’Arthur*, and one or two Spanish romances, which will be afterwards mentioned, the *Seven Champions* appears to have been the most popular book of its class. It has accumulated in a small compass the most

* Vide Warton’s *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, and Todd’s edition of Spenser’s Works, vol. ii. p. lxviii.

† Vide *Bibliotheca Reediana*, No. 2670, and Todd’s Spenser, vol. ii. p. lxvii. note k.

remarkable adventures of the ancient metrical romances, and has related them in a rich and figurative, though somewhat turgid style. Justice has been done to this compilation, once so high in repute, both by Percy and Warton: the former speaks of its "strong Gothic painting," and of its adherence to the old poetical legends;* and the latter declares it to contain "some of the most capital fictions of the old Arabian romance," and instances the adventure of the Enchanted Fountain.†

The various editions of this once celebrated compilation attest the longevity of its fame; and though now no longer the amusement of the learned and the great, yet it is far from being a stranger to the literature of our juvenile libraries. A London impression appeared in 1755, and it has lately been reprinted in a pocket-edition of the British Classics.

Having thus brought forward *La Morte D'Arthur* and the *Seven Champions* as the most popular prose compilations in Shakspeare's time from the Anglo-Norman metrical romances, we shall proceed to notice two collections which were more immediately built on an oriental foundation, and which have enjoyed, both at the epoch of their first translation into English in the sixteenth century, and subsequently to a very modern date, an almost unrivalled circulation.

A little anterior to the birth of our great poet, W. Copland printed, without date, a romance entitled "*The Seven Wise Masters*," a direct version from the Latin of a book published in Germany, soon after the discovery of the art of printing, under the appellation of *Historia Septem Sapientum*. This interesting series of tales has been traced by Mr. Douce to an Indian prototype: to "*The Book of the Seven Counsellors, or Parables of Sandebar or Sandabar*," an Indian philosopher, who is supposed to have lived about a century before the Christian æra. The work of this sage, it appears, had been early translated into Persic, Syriac, Arabic, and, from this latter into Hebrew by Rabbi Joel, under the title of "*Mischle Sandabar*," a version which is conjectured to have been made about the middle of the fourteenth century, and is believed to be the only oriental manuscript of these Parables which has been subjected to the press; having been printed at Constantinople in 1517, and at Venice in 1544 and 1608. A MS. of this Hebrew Sandabar is in the British Museum (Harleian MSS., No. 5449), but no English version of it has been hitherto attempted.

The romance of our Indian fabulist made its next appearance, though with some alterations in the incidents and names, in Greek, under the title of *Syntipas*, of which many MSS. exist, the greater number professing to be translated from the Syriac; but in the British Museum is preserved a copy from the Persic, of so late a date as 1667.

The first Latin version is said to have proceeded from the pen of Jean de Hauteselve, a native of Lorraine, but the existence of such a copy is now only known, from its having been translated into French verse, by an ecclesiastic of the name of Herbers, who died in 1226, and who, in the opening of his poem, to which he has given the singular title of *Dolopatos*, confesses to have taken it from the "*bel Latin*" of Hauteselve.

"Another French version, however, of greater importance, as it makes a nearer approach to the remote original, and has been the source of numerous imitations, is preserved in the French National Library, and numbered 7595. It is a MS. in verse, of the 13th century, and was first noticed by Mr. Ellis, through a communication with Mr. Douce, who believes it to be not only the immediate original of many imitations in French prose, but the source whence an old English metrical romance in the Cotton Library (Galba, E. 9.) has been taken.

This poem, a large fragment of which exist in the Auchinleck M.S., is entire in the Cotton Library, and is written in lines of eight syllables. It is entitled

* Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 217.

† History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 230.

"The Proces of the Sevyng Sages," and Mr. Ellis refers its composition to a period not later than 1330.

The copy, however, which has given rise to the greatest number of translations, is that already mentioned under the title of "*Historia Septem Sapientum*," the first edition of which, with a date, was published by John Hoelhoff at Cologne in 1490. This was very rapidly transfused into the German, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, English, and Scotch languages.

Of the Scotch version, which is metrical, and was undertaken by the translator "at the request of his Ant Cait (Aunt Kate) in Tanstelloun Castle, during the siege of Leith," 1560, the first edition was printed at Edinburgh in 1578, with the following title:—"The Sevin Seages, Translatit out of Prois in Scottis Meter, Be Johne Rolland, in Dalkeith; with ane Moralitie after everie Doctouris tale, and sicklike after the Emprice tale, togidder with ane loving and laude to everie Doctour after his awin tale, and ane exclamation and outerying when the Empreouris wife after hir fals construsit tale. Imprentit at Edinburgh be John Ros, for Henry Charteries."

The prose translation by Copland, which made its appearance between the years 1550 and 1567, under the title of "*The Seven Wise Masters*," was one of the most popular books of the sixteenth century. It has undergone a variety of re-impressions, and when no longer occupying its former place in the hall of the Baron and the Squire, descending to a less ambitious station, it became the most delectable volume in the collection of the School-boy. This change in the field of its influence seems to have taken place in little better than a century after its introduction into the English language; for in 1674, Francis Kirkman, publishing a version from the Italian copy of this romance, which he entitles the "*History of Prince Erastus, son to the emperor Diocletian, and those famous philosophers called The Seven Wise Masters of Rome*," informs us, in his preface, "that the book of '*The Seven Wise Masters*' is in such estimation in Ireland, that it was always put into the hands of young children immediately after the horn-book."*

The "*Book of the Seven Counsellors*," in short, appears to have been familiarised in the language of every civilised nation in Asia and Europe, and though often interpolated and disguised by the admixture of fables from other oriental collections, and especially from the fables of Pilpay, it has still preserved, through every transfusion, a resemblance of its Indian type. Its admission into English literature contributed to cherish and keep alive the taste for Eastern romance, which had been generated during the period of the Crusades, and adopted by the Anglo-Norman minstrels.

If the collection of oriental apologues, to which we have alluded under the name of Pilpay, had been as early naturalised amongst us, the effect in favour of oriental fable would probably have been greater; but it was the fate of this work, though superior in merit perhaps, and of equal antiquity and similar origin with the Parables of Sandabar, and alike popular in the East, not to have acquired an English dress until the eighteenth century. The Heetopades of Veeshnoo Sarma, the undoubted source of Pilpay's stories, we, at length, possess, in a correct state, forming certainly the most interesting series of fables extant.†

There is another set of tales, however, in their complexion almost entirely oriental, which not only co-operated in their effect, but also in their period of introduction, with the "*Seven Wise Masters*," from the press of Copland.

* This short summary has been drawn up from the larger account detailed by Mr. Ellis in his specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, vol. iii. p. 1—22.

† The common version of Pilpay was published in 1747. It should be remarked, however, that a translation from the Italian of Doni, containing many of the fables of Pilpay, and professedly rendered by Doni, from the *Directorium Humanæ Vitæ, vel Parabole Antiquorum Sapientum*, was given in English by Sir Thomas North, 4to. 1570, and 1601, under the title of the "*Moral Philosophy of Doni*." From this source, therefore, Shakspeare and his contemporaries may have been partially acquainted with this collection of tales.

In 1577 Richard Robinson, a voluminous author who lived by his pen, published "A record of ancyent historyes intituled in Latin *Gesta Romanorum*;" and in a catalogue of his productions, written by himself, and preserved in the British Museum, he says of this work, that it was "translated (auctore ut supponitur Iohane Leylando antiquario) by mee perused, corrected and bettered." *

This is a partial version of one of two distinct works entitled, *Gesta Romanorum*, collections of tales in the Latin language which, there is reason to suppose, originated in the fourteenth century, and certainly once enjoyed the highest popularity.

Of the first, or what may be called the Continental *Gesta*, Mr. Warton has given us a very elaborate and pleasing analysis. No manuscript of this primary collection is known to exist, but it was printed about 1473; the first six editions of it are in folio without dates; three containing 152 chapters or gestic each, and three 181 each, and of those printed with dates, in folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo, a list, amounting to twenty-eight, has been published by Mr. Douce, from the year 1480 to 1555 inclusive. A Dutch translation appeared in 1481; a German translation in 1489; the first French translation with a date in 1521; but no English translation until 1703, when only forty-five histories or gestic were published, the translator, either from want of encouragement, or from some other cause, having only printed volume the first of his intended version.

"The second or English *Gesta* must be considered as the discovery of Mr. Douce, for Warton, not perceiving its frequent discrepancy, had confounded it with the original work. It is likewise remarkable, that the circumstances attending its circulation are diametrically different from those accompanying the prior collection; for while numerous MSS. of the English *Gesta* exist in this country, not one copy in the original Latin has been printed.

It appears from the researches of Mr. Douce, that this compilation very soon followed the original *Gesta*, and that the first manuscript may with great probability be ascribed to a period as early as the reign of Richard the Second; most of the MSS. however, none of which have ever been found upon the Continent, are of the age of fifth and sixth Henries, and of these twenty-five are yet remaining preserved in the British Museum, at Oxford, and in other collections.

As the English *Gesta* was intended as an imitation of the Continental collection, many of its stories have, of course, been retained; but these have undergone such alterations in language, and sometimes in incident, together with new moralizations, and new names, as to give it, with the addition of forty tales not found in its prototype, the air of an original work.† It is not, however, so extensive as the foreign compilation, the most complete manuscripts containing only one hundred and two stories; yet as the sources from which it has drawn its materials are, with a few exceptions, correspondent, in respect to their oriental origin, with the continental copy, the character which Mr. Warton has given, of the primary will apply to the secondary series.

"This work," he observes, "is compiled from the obsolete Latin chronicles of the later Roman or rather German story, heightened by romantic inventions, from Legends of the Saints, oriental apologues, and many of the shorter fictitious narratives which came into Europe with the Arabian literature, and were familiar in the ages of ignorance and imagination. The classics are sometimes cited for authorities; but these are of the lower order, such as Valerius Maximus, Macrobius, Aulus Gellius, Seneca, Pliny, and Boethius. To every tale a Moralization is subjoined, reducing it into a christian or moral lesson.

"Most of the oriental apologues are taken from the "*Clericalis Disciplina*," or a Latin dialogue between an Arabian Philosopher and Edric‡ his son, never printed §, written by Peter Alphon-

* Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 424.

† Two of these tales, chap. 31 and 32. are immediately taken from "The Seven Wise Masters," and may be found also in the Arabian Nights and Pilpay's Fables.

‡ "Edric was the name of Enoch among the Arabians, to whom they attribute many fabulous compositions. Herbelot, in V., Lydgate's 'Chorle' and 'The Bird' is taken from the '*Clericalis Disciplina*.'"

§ MSS. Harl. 3861, and in many other libraries. It occurs in old French verse, MSS. Digb. 86. membrar. "Le Romaune de Peres Aunfour coment il aprist et chastia son fils belement."

sus, a baptized Jew, at the beginning of the twelfth century, and collected from Arabian fables, apothegms, and examples.* Some are also borrowed from an old Latin translation of the "Calilah u Damnah," a celebrated set of eastern fables, to which Alphonsus was indebted.

"On the whole, this is the collection in which a curious enquirer might expect to find the original of Chaucer's Cambuscan:—

"Or,——if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear."†

Of the translations of the English Gesta, which, owing to the Latin original not being known upon the Continent, are solely confined to the English language, three only have been noticed; and of these, the first is a manuscript in the Harleian collection, No. 7,333, of the age of Henry the Sixth, containing but seventy stories, and which Mr. Douce conjectures to have been produced either by Lydgate, Gower, or Occleve, as the English Gesta appears familiar to them, and this version possesses not only several pieces by Lydgate, but some tales from the "Confessio Amantis" of Gower.‡

The first printed translation is said to have issued from the press of Wynkyn de Worde, though without a date, and this edition has been mentioned and referred to, both by Mr. Warton§ and Dr. Farmer. Neither Herbert, however, nor Mr. Dibdin, has been fortunate enough to detect its existence, and if it really had, or has, a being, it is probably either the manuscript version of the reign of Henry the Sixth, or the translation to which Robinson alludes as the work of Leland the antiquary.

We must, therefore, look to Robinson's Translation of 1577, as the only one which has met with a general and undisputed circulation; and this was so popular, that in 1601 it had been printed six times by Thomas Easte.** The most enlarged edition, however, of Robinson's version, contains but forty-four stories, and it is, therefore, much to be regretted, that the Harleian manuscript is not committed to the press.

As this was then the only English translation accessible to the public, of a collection of tales which in the original Latin, and under the same name, had amused the learned and the curious for some centuries, both on the Continent, and for nearly the same space of time on our own island, we shall not be surprised if we find, in a subsequent page, that Shakspeare has availed himself of a portion of its contents, especially as its subjects, and the mode of treating them, coincided with his track of reading.

The popularity of Robinson's work seems to have extended to the eighteenth century; for the last edition, which we can now recollect, is dated 1703, and there is reason to think it the fifteenth, while the edition immediately preceding was published in 1689, but fourteen years anteriorly.

If Ascham thought he had reason to complain of the popularity of *Morte Arthur*, and its associates, he found tenfold cause of complaint in the daily increasing circulation of Italian Romances and Tales; "Ten La Morte d'Arthures," he exclaims, "doe not the tenth parte so much harme, as one of these bookes made in Italie, and translated in Englande."††

The frequent communication indeed with Italy, which took place about the middle of the sixteenth century, had not only induced an indiscriminate imitation

* "See Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 325. seq."

† Milton's "Il Penseroso." Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. Dissertation on the Gesta Romanorum, p. v. vi.

‡ Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 422.

§ History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 18. vol. iii. p. lxxxiii.

** According to his own assertion, in the MS. catalogue of his works in the British Museum, to which he has given the title of "Eupolemia." See Douce's Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 423, 425.

†† Ascham's Schole Master, Bennet's edit. 4to. p. 255.

of Italian manners, but had rendered the literature of the Italians so fashionable, that, together with their poetry, was imported into this island a multiplicity of their *prose* fictions and tales, a species of composition that had been cultivated in Italy with incredible ardour from the period of Sacchetti and Boccacio.

These tales, by blending with the romantic fiction of the Normans and Orientals the scenes of domestic life and manners; by introducing greater complexity and skill in the arrangement of fable and greater probability in the nature and construction of incident; by intermingling more frequent and more interesting traits of the softer passions, and by exciting more powerfully the emotions of pity and compassion, presented to the public a new and poignant source of gratification, and furnished the dramatic poets and the caterers for the then universal appetite for story-telling with innumerable bases for plays, tales, and ballads.*

It may be asserted, we believe, with a close approach to accuracy, that in the space which elapsed between the middle of the sixteenth century, and the accession of James the First, nearly all the most striking fictions of the Italian novelists had found their way to the English press; either immediately translated from the original Italian, or through the medium of Latin, French, or Spanish versions.

Of these curious collections of prose narrative, real or imaginary, comic or tragic, it will be thought necessary that we should notice a few of the most valuable, and especially those to which our great poet has been most indebted.

One of the earliest of these works, and mentioned by Laneham in 1575, as an article in Captain Cox's library, was entitled "The Hundred Merry Tales." This series of stories, though existing in English so late as 1659, † is now unfortunately lost; the probability, however, is that it was a translation from "*Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*," printed at Paris before the year 1500, and compiled from Italian writers. The English copy, says Warton, was licensed to be printed by John Waly, in 1557, under the title of "A Hundreth mery Tales," together with *The freere and the boye, stans puer ad mensam, and youthe, charite and humylite.*‡ It is again noticed in the register of the Stationers' Company for 1581, by Ames, under the article for James Roberts, and in the following manner in a black-letter pamphlet of 1586:—"Wee want not also pleasaunt mad headed knaves that bee properly learned and well reade in diverse pleasaunt bookes and good authors. As Sir Guy of Warwicke, the Foure Sons of Aymon, the Ship of Fooles, the Budget of Demandes, the Hundredth merry Tales, the Booke of Ryddles, and many other excellent writers both witty and pleasaunt."§ It is alluded to by Shakspeare, in his *Much Ado about Nothing*, written about 1600, where Beatrice complains of Benedict having declared, that she had "her good wit out of the Hundred Merry Tales."—Act ii. sc. 1. That this collection was justly entitled to the epithet merry has been proved by Mr. Douce, from a reference to the supposed original, in which only five stories out of the hundred are of a tragic cast, and where the title, in the old editions, gives further propriety to the appellation, by terming these tales "*Comptes plaisans et recreatiz pour deviser en toutes compaignies, et moult plaisans à raconter par manière de joyeuseté.*"** It should not be forgotten, however, that the work entitled "*Cento novelle antiche*" was in existence at this period, though no translation of it is known to have been

* A writer, whose work has just fallen into my hands, closes a long and accurate analysis of the Italian Tales, with the following just observations:—"The larger works of fiction," he remarks, "resemble those productions of a country which are consumed within itself, while tales, like the more delicate and precious articles of traffic, which are exported from their native soil, have gladdened and delighted every land. They are the ingredients from which Shakspeare, and other enchanterers of his day, have distilled those magical drops which tend so much to sweeten the lot of humanity, by occasionally withdrawing the mind, from the cold and naked realities of life, to visionary scenes and visionary bliss."—Dunlop's *History of Fiction*, vol. ii. p. 409.

† "In *The London Chaunticlères*, 1659, this work, among others," remarks Mr. Steevens, "is cried for sale by a ballad-man; *The Seven Wise Men of Gotham*; a *Hundred merry Tales*; *Scoggin's Jests*," &c.

‡ *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 475.

§ *The English Courtier and the Cuntrey Gentleman*, sig. H. 4.

** *Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 166.

made, either before or during Shakspeare's age; nor is it improbable that the term "A Hundred merry Tales," might have become a kind of cant expression for an attack of personal satire; for Nashe, as Mr. Douce has observed, "in his *Pappe with an hatchet*," speaks of a book then coming out under the title of *A hundred merrie Tales*, in which Martin Marprelate, i. e. John Penry, and his friend were to be satirized." *

Though no complete translation of the *Decameron* of Boccacio was executed before 1620, the greater part of his novels was given to the public in 1566, by William Paynter in his once popular collection, entitled "*The Pallace of Pleasure*." This entertaining work occupies two volumes, 4to, of which the first, dedicated to Lord Warwick, appeared in the year above-mentioned, "containing sixty novels out of Boccacio," and the second followed in 1567, including thirty-four novels, principally from Bandello, and dedicated to Sir George Howard. It appears to have been the intention of the compiler to have added a third part; for at the close of the second volume, he tells us, "Bicause sodeynly, contrary to expectation, this volume is risen to greater heape of leaves, I doe omit for this present time Sundry Novels of mery devize, reserving the same to be joyned with the rest of an other part, wherein shall succede the remnant of Bandello, specially sutch, suffrable, as the learned French man François de Belleforrest hath selected, and the choysiest done in the Italian. Some also out of Erizzo, Ser Giouanni Florentino, Parabosco, Cynthio, Straparole, Sansovino, and the best liked out of the Queene of Nauarre, and others;" a passage which is important, as showing, in a small compass, the nature and extent of his resources.

What motive prevented the continuance of the work, is unascertained; it certainly could not be want of encouragement, for a second edition of the first volume, and a third of the second, were published together in 4to, in 1575, and, as the author informs us in his title "eftsones perused, corrected, and augmented" by him. The conjecture of Warton, that Painter "in compliance with the prevailing mode of publication, and for the accommodation of universal readers, was afterward persuaded to print his sundry novels in the perishable form of separate pamphlets," is not improbable.

The *Palace of Pleasure* is, without doubt, not only one of the earliest, but one of the most valuable selections of tales which appeared during the reign of Elizabeth; and that it formed one of the ornaments of Shakspeare's library, and one to which he was in the habit of referring the industry of his commentators, has been sufficiently established. †

In the same year with the second volume of Painter's *Palace*, appeared "*Certaine Tragicall Discourses*," by Geffray Fenton, in one volume 4to, bl. letter. This passing pleasant book, as Turberville terms it, consists of stories principally from Italian writers, and, in the dedication to Lady Mary Sydney, the author expresses his high opinion of their merit, by declaring, "neyther do I thinke that oure Englishe recordes are hable to yelde at this daye a Romant more delicat and chaste, treatynge of the veraye theame and effectes of love, than theis Hytories;" an estimate of the value of his collection in which he is borne out by his friend Turberville, who, in one of the recommendatory poems prefixed to the book, says—

"The learned stories erst, and sugred tales that laye
Removed from simple common sence, this writer doth displaye:
Nowe men of meanest skill, what Bandel wrought may vew,
And tell the tale in Englishe well, that erst they never knewe:
Discourse of sundrye strange, and tragicall affaires,
Of lovyng ladyes helpless haps, theyr deathes, and deadly cares."

Mr. Warton is of opinion that Fenton's compilation "in point of selection and size", is "perhaps the most capital miscellany of this kind." ‡ In size, however,

* Illustrations, vol. i. p. 168.

† The Roxburghe copy of the *Palace of Pleasure* produced the sum of 42l.

‡ History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 478.

it is certainly inferior to Painter's work, and from a survey of its contents with which we have been indulged, exhibits, in our conception, no superiority to its predecessor, even with regard to selection; it merits, however, the same honour, that of a re-print.

In 1571 a series of tales, somewhat similar to Fenton's, was published under the title of "The Forest or collection of Historyes, no lesse profitable than pleasant and necessary, doone out of Frenche into English by Thomas Fortescue." This production, which forms a quarto in black letter, and underwent a second and a third edition, in 1576 and 1596, includes many stories manifestly of Italian birth and structure, though the work is said to have been originally written in the Spanish language.

On the authority of Bishop Tanner, as reported by Warton,* we have to ascribe to the year 1580, a prose version of the *Novelle* of Bandello, next to Boccaccio the most celebrated, at that period, among the Italian novelists; and more chaste perhaps than any of them in his sentiments, and more easy and natural in the construction of his incidents. The translation is said to be by W. W., initials which Mr. Warton is inclined to appropriate, either to William Warner or William Webbe.

Another collection of tales, several of which are from Giraldi Cinthio and other Italian fabulists, was given to the public by George Whetstone, in 1582, under the appellation of *Heptameron*, a term which had been rendered fashionable by the popularity of a suite of tales published at Paris in 1560, and entitled "Heptameron des Nouvelles de la Royne de Navarre." Whetstone possessed no inconsiderable reputation in his day; he has been praised as a poet by Meres and Webbe, and his *Heptameron*, though written in prose, with only the occasional interspersions of poetry, had its share of contemporary fame, and the still greater celebrity of furnishing some portion of a plot to our great dramatic bard.†

The first volume of a large collection of Italian tales made its appearance at Paris in 1583, under the title of "Cent Histoires Tragiques." This work, the compilation of Francis de Belleforrest and Boisteau, was ultimately extended to seven volumes, and a part of it, if not the whole, appears, on the authority of the Stationers' Register, to have been translated into English, in 1596.‡ The edition, however, to which Warton alludes, must have been posthumous; for Belleforrest died on January 1st, 1583, and that he had printed selections from the Italian novelists long anterior, is evident from Painter's reference to them in the second volume of his *Palace of Pleasure*, dated 1567. Probably what the historian terms the "grand repository" commenced with the copy of 1583.

Independent of these large prose collections of Italian tales, a vast variety of separate stories was in circulation from the same source; and many of our poets, such as Gascoigne, Tuberville, etc. § amused themselves by giving them a metrical and sometimes a semi-metrical form. By these means the more rugged

* History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 473.

† Ritson thinks that Whetstone's *Heptameron* was republished in 1593, under the title of "Aurelia." In the Roxburghe Library, No. 6392, this romance is termed "The Paragon of Pleasure, or the Christmas Pleasures of Queene Aurelia," 4to. 1593.

‡ Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 487.

§ Of the Italian tales it may be useful to enumerate the best and most celebrated of those which were written during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; as, in some shape or other, most of them became familiar to English readers before the death of Shakspeare.

1. Cento Novelle Antike. The earliest collection of Italian novels.—2. Boccaccio il Decamerone. Venet. Valdarfer. 1471. This, which is the first edition, was purchased at the Roxburghe sale, by the Marquis of Blandford, for 2260l.—3. Novelle di Sacchetti. Sacchetti died in 1408.—4. Masuccio, Il Novellino, nel quale si contengono cinquanta Novelle. Best edition that of 1484, folio.—5. Sabadino, Porretane, dove si narra Novelle settanta una.—6. Sansovino, Cento Novelle scelte da più nobili Scrittori.—7. Giovanni Fiorentino, il Pecorone, nel quale si contengono cinquanta Novelle antiche. First and best edition, 1559.—8. Novelle del Bandello, 3 vols. 4to. 1554.—9. Straparola, le piacevoli Notte. 2 vols. 1557.—10. Giraldi Cinthio, gli Hecatombithi, (Cento Novelle). 4 vols.—11. Erizzo, le Sei Giornate (trenta cinque Novelle). Edizione prim. 4to. 1567.—12. Parabosco, i Diporti, o varo Novelle, Venet. 1558.—13. Granucci, la piacirol Notte, et lieto Giorno (undici Novelle), Venet. 1574.—14. Novelle di Ascanio de Mori. 4to. 1585.—15. Malespini, Ducento Novelle, 4to.

features of the Anglo-Norman romance were softened down, and a style of fiction introduced, more varied and more consonant to nature.

The taste, however, for the wild beauties of Gothic fabling, though polished and refined by the elegant imagination of the Italians, was still cultivated with ardour, and, towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, was further stimulated, by a fresh infusion of similar imagery, through the medium of the Spanish and Portuguese Romances.

These elaborate, and sometimes very interesting productions, are evidently constructed on the model of the Anglo-Norman romance, though with greater unity of design, and with more attention to morality. There is reason to believe, with Mr. Tyrwhitt, that neither Spain nor Portugal can produce a romance of this species older than the era of printing; for the manuscript of Amadis of Gaul, which has been satisfactorily proved by Mr. Southey to have been the production of Vasco Lobeira, and written in the Portuguese language, during the close of the fourteenth century, * was never printed, and is supposed to be no longer in existence; while the Spanish version of Garciordonez de Montalvo, the oldest extant, and which has, in general, passed for the original, did not issue from the press before the year 1510, the date of its publication at Salamanca.

This romance, beyond all doubt the most interesting of its † class, is well known as one of the very few in Don Quixote's library which escaped the merciless fury of the Licentiate and the Barber.

“The first that master Nicholas put into his hands was Amadis de Gaul in four parts; and the priest said, ‘There seems to be some mystery in this; for, as I have heard say, this was the first book of chivalry printed in Spain, and all the rest have had their foundation and rise from it; and, therefore, I think, as head of so pernicious a sect, we ought to condemn him to the fire without mercy.’—‘Not so, sir,’ said the barber; ‘for I have heard also, that it is the best of all the books of this kind; and therefore, as being singular in his art, he ought to be spared.’—‘It is true,’ said the priest, ‘and for that reason his life is granted him.’” Nor is the description which Sir Philip Sidney has given of the effects of Amadis on its readers less important than the encomium of Cervantes on its literary merit; “Truly,” says the knight, “I have known men, that even with reading Amadis de Gaul, have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage.” ‡

The introduction of Amadis into the English language took place in the year 1592, when the first four or five books were translated from the French version and printed by Wolfe. § It experienced the same popularity here which had attended its naturalisation in France, Italy, and Spain, and seems to have been in the zenith of its reputation among us at the close of the Shakspearean era; for Fynes Moryson, who published his Itinerary in 1617, in his directions to a traveller how to acquire languages, says, “I think no book better for his discourse than Amadis of Gaul; for the knights errant, and the ladies of courts, doe therein exchange courtly speeches, and these books are in all languages translated by the masters of eloquence;” and Burton in his Anatomy of Melancholy written about the same period, mentions Amadis along with Huon of Bourdeaux, as one of the most fashionable volumes of his day. Such, indeed, is the merit of this romance, that the lapse of four hundred years has not greatly diminished its attractions, and the admirable version of Mr. Southey, which, by rejecting or veiling the occasional indelicacy of the original, has removed the weightiest objections of Ascham, most deservedly finds admirers even in the nineteenth century.

Another specimen of this class of romances of nearly equal popularity with the preceding, though inferior in point of merit, may be instanced in the once cele-

* Vide Aikin's General Biography, vol. vi. article Lobeira.

† “Amadis of Gaul,” remarks Mr. Southey, “is among prose, what Orlando Furioso is among metrical Romances, not the oldest of its kind, but the best.”—*Preliminary Essay to his Translation*, 4 vols. 1803.

‡ “This” (Amadis de Gaul), says Mr. Burnet, “is perhaps one of the most beautiful books that ever was written.”—*Specimens of English Prose Writers*, vol. i. p. 289. note.

§ Sir Philip Sidney's Works, edit. 1629. p. 551. This version, reprinted in 1618, is by A. Munday.

brated "Palmerin of England," which, like Amadis of Gaul, safely passed the ordeal of the Curate of Don Quixote's village:—"Let Palmerin of England," says the Licentiate, "be preserved, and kept as a singular piece: and let such another case be made for it, as that which Alexander found among the spoils of Darius, and appropriated to preserve the works of the poet Homer.—Therefore, Master Nicholas, saving your better judgment, let this and Amadis de Gaul be exempted from the fire, and let all the rest perish without any further enquiry."

Palmerin of England, like its prototype, Amadis de Gaul, is supposed to have originated in Portugal. Mr. Southey, indeed, confidently attributes it to the pen of Francis de Moraes: an ascription which is in direct opposition to the authority of Cervantes, who asserts it to have been written by a King of Portugal. It has shared the like fate, too, in this country, with regard to its translator; Anthony Munday having been the first to usher Palmerin, as well as Amadis, to an English public; in fact, though in its original garb it appeared a century and a half later than the romance of Lobeira, it claims priority with regard to its English dress, having been licensed to Charlewood, and printed in 1580.

The multiplicity and rapid succession of extraordinary events in Palmerin of England, are such as to distract the most steady attention, and if it really deserved the encomium which the curate bestowed upon it in comparison with the rest of the worthy knight's library, little surprise can be excited at the mental hallucinations which the study of such a collection might ultimately produce.

Of the versions of honest Anthony, one of the most indefatigable translators of romance in the reign of Elizabeth, not much can be said, either in point of style or fidelity. Labouring for those who possessed an eager and indiscriminating appetite for the marvellous, he was not greatly solicitous about the preservation of the manners and costume of his original, but rather strove to accommodate his authors to the taste of the majority of his readers. To enumerate the various romances which he attempted to naturalise, would be tedious and unprofitable; the two that we have already noticed, together with "Palmerin D'Olive," and "The honorable, pleasant, and rare conceited Historie of Palmendo," were among the most popular, and will be sufficient to impart an idea of what, among the peninsular works of fiction, were most in vogue, when romances were as much read as novels are in the present age.

The last species of romance, which we shall notice as fashionable in Elizabeth's reign, may be termed the Pastoral. Of this class the most celebrated specimen that we can mention, is the "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney, a book well known to Shakspeare, which continued highly popular for near a century, and reached an eighth edition as early as 1633, independent of impressions in Scotland, of which one occurs before the year 1600. *

The Arcadia appears to have been commenced by its author for the sole amusement of himself and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, during his residence at Wilton, in 1580, and though prosecuted at various periods was left incomplete at his death in 1586. The affection of the Countess, however, to whose care and protection the scattered manuscripts had been assigned, induced her to publish an impression of it in the year 1590, revised under her own immediate direction; since which period fourteen editions have borne testimony to the merits of the work, and to the correctness of the editor's judgment.

To the publication of this far-famed romance, which is in many respects truly beautiful, and in every respect highly moral, we may attribute an important revolution in the annals of fictitious writing. It appears to have been suggested to the mind of Sir Philip, by two models of very different ages, and to have been built in fact on their admixture; these are the Ethiopic History of Heliodorus, Bishop

* In a letter from Mr. Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney, dated September 1599, it is said, that "the Arcadia is now printed in Scotland, according to the best edition, which will make them good cheap, but is very hurtful to Ponsonbie, who held them at a very high rate: he must sell as others doe, or they will lye upon his hands."—Vide Zouch's Memoirs of Sir Philip Sidney, p. 361.

of Tricca, in Thessaly, and the Arcadia of Sannazaro, productions as widely separated as the fourth and sixteenth centuries. Their connection, however, will be more readily explained, when we recollect, that a translation of Heliodorus into English had been published only three years before the commencement of Sidney's Arcadia. This was the work of Thomas Underdowne, who printed a version of the ten entire books in 1577, dedicating them to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. That the English Heliodorus was chiefly instrumental in giving this peculiar direction to the genius of Sidney, was the opinion of Warton; but we must likewise recollect, that the Arcadia of Sannazaro, with which Sir Philip, as an excellent Italian scholar, must have been well acquainted, presented him with the model for his shepherds, for their costume, diction, and sentiment, and that, like the English work, it is a mingled composition of poetry and prose.

Dismissing many of the paraphernalia of the ancient chivalric romance, its magicians, enchanted castles, dragons, and giants, but retaining its high-toned spirit of gallantry, heroism, and courtesy, combined with the utmost purity in morals, and with all the traditionary simplicity and innocence of rural life, the pastoral romance of Sidney exhibited a species of composition more reconcilable to probability than the adventures of Arthur and Amadis, but less natural and familiar than the tales of the Italians. In these last, however, virtue and decency are too often sacrificed at the shrine of licentiousness, whilst in the Arcadia of our countryman not a sentiment occurs which can excite a blush on the cheek of the most delicate modesty. To this moral tendency of Sidney's fictions, the muse of Cowper has borne testimony, in "The Task," book iv.

Had the disciples of Sir Philip adhered to the model which he constructed; had they, rejecting merely his unfortunate attempt to introduce the Roman metres into modern poetry, preserved his strength and animation in description, his beauty and propriety of sentiment, his variety and discrimination of character, the school of Sidney might have existed at the present hour. On the contrary, whatever was objectionable and overstrained in their prototype, they found out the art to aggravate; and by a monstrous and monotonous overcharge of character, by a bloated tenuity of style, by a vein of sentiment so quaintly exalted as to have nothing of human sympathy about it, and by an indefinite prolixity of fable, they contrived to outrage nature nearly as much as had been effected by the wonders of necromancy and the achievements of chivalry; and this, too, without producing a scintillation of those splendid traits of fancy which illumine, and even atone for, the wild fictions of the Anglo-Norman romance. The Astrea of D'Urfé, written about twenty years after Sidney's work, though sufficiently tedious, and frequently unnatural, makes the nearest approach to the pastoral beauty of the Arcadia; but what longevity can attach to, or what patience shall endure, the numerous and prodigious tomes of Madame Scuderi?*

The shades of oblivion seem gathering fast even over the beautiful reveries of Sidney, a fate most undoubtedly hastened by the prolix and perverted labours of his successors; and what was the fashion and delight of the seventeenth century has generally ceased to charm. So great, indeed, was once the popularity of the Arcadia, that its effects became an object of consideration to the satirist and the historian. In 1631, we find the former thus admonishing the ladies:—"Insteade of songes and musicke let them learn cookerie and launderie. And instead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, let them reade the groundes of good huswifery."† But the grave annalist and antiquary, Fuller, has, with more good sense, vindicated the study of this moral romance:—"I confess," says he, "I

* Among the bulky romances of this prolific lady, who died June 2, 1701, aged 94, it may be worth while to enumerate a few, merely as instances of her uncommon fecundity, viz. *Artamene, ou le Grand Cyrus*, 10 vols. 8vo.; *Clelie*, 10 vols. 8vo.; *Almahide ou l'Esclave Reine*, 8 vols. 8vo.; *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa*, 4 vols. 8vo.

† *Tom of All Trades, or the plaine Pathway to Preferment, &c.* By Thomas Powell. Lond. 1631. 4to. pp. 47, 48.—Vide Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 425 and 426.

I have heard some of modern pretended wits cavil at the *Arcadia*, because they made it not themselves: such who say that this book is the occasion that many precious hours are otherwise spent no better, must acknowledge it also the cause that many idle hours are otherwise spent no worse than in reading thereof."* There is no work, in short, in the department of prose-fiction which contains more apothegmatic wisdom than the *Arcadia* of Sidney; and it is to be regretted that the volume which had charmed a Shakspeare, a Milton, and a Waller, and which has been praised by Temple, by Heylin, and by Cowper, should be suffered in any deference to the opinion of Lord Orford, to slumber on the shelf.

It is with pleasure, however, that we find a very modern critic not only passing a just and animated eulogium on the *Arcadia*, but asserting on his own personal knowledge, that, even in the general classes of society, it has still its readers and admirers.

"Nobody, it has been said, reads the *Arcadia*. We have known very many persons who have read it, men, women, and children, and never knew one who read it without deep interest and admiration of the genius of the writer, great in proportion as they were capable of appreciating it. The verses are very bad, not that he was a bad poet (on the contrary, much of his poetry is of high merit), but because he was then versifying upon an impracticable system. Let the reader pass over all the eclogues, as dull interludes unconnected with the drama, and if he do not delight in the story itself, in the skill with which the incidents are woven together and unravelled, and in the Shakspearean power and character of language, with which they are painted, let him be assured the fault is in himself, and not in the book."†

After this brief survey of the state of romantic literature, and of the various romances which were most popular in the days of Shakspeare, it will be a proper appendage, if we add a few observations on the yet lingering relics of chivalric costume. That gorgeous spectacle, the Tournament, in which numerous knights engaged together on either side, fighting with the sword and truncheon, was latterly superseded by the just or tilting-match, consisting of a succession of combats between two knights at one time, and in which the spear was the only weapon used. The dexterous management of this military amusement depended upon striking the front of the opponent's helmet, in such a manner as either to beat him backward from his horse, or break the spear in the contest. Justing or tilting, which was usually celebrated in honour of the ladies, by whom the prizes were always awarded and distributed, continued to be a favourite diversion with Elizabeth to the close of her reign; she was attached to the gallantry which constituted the soul of these games, and to the splendour which accompanied their exhibition; and her nobles were not backward in encouraging and gratifying her romantic taste. Of this a remarkable instance may be adduced, in the person of Sir Henry Lee, Knight of the Garter, who vowed that he would annually, while health and strength permitted, enter the tilt-yard as his sovereign's knight. The completion of this vow led to annual contentions in the lists, and twenty-five personages of the first rank, among whom are to be found Lord Leicester, Sir Christopher Hatton, etc. agreed to establish a society of arms for this purpose. The presidency of the association was resigned by Sir Henry, on the plea of infirmity, in 1590, when he formally invested the Earl of Cumberland with his dignity, one of the most envied at that time, in the court of Elizabeth.‡

It was usual at these chivalric exhibitions, which ceased on the demise of their regal patroness, for the combatants, and even the men of fashion who attended as spectators, to wear a lady's favour on their arm; and when a knight had tilted with peculiar grace and spirit, the ladies were wont to fling a scarf or glove upon him as he passed; a custom which Shakspeare has attributed, as is frequent with him, to an age long anterior to chivalric usage, for he represents Coriolanus, on his way to the Capitol, as thus honoured:

* Fuller's *Worthies*, 1662, part ii. p. 75.

† Aikin's *Annual Review*, vol. iv. p. 547.

‡ Pennant's *London*, p. 103.

————— “The matrons flung their gloves,
Ladies and maids their scarfs and handkerchiefs,
Upon him as he pass’d.”

It appears also, from a passage in the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, that an oath derived from a singular observance in the days of chivalry, was common in the days of Shakspeare; for Shallow, persuading Sir John Falstaff to remain with him as his visitor, exclaims, “By cock and pye, Sir, you shall not away to night;” an adjuration which Steevens and Ridley refer to a corruption of the sacred name, and to a service-book of the Romish church, called in this country, previous to the Reformation, a pie; but Mr. Douce has, with more probability, advanced the origin to which we allude.

“It will, no doubt, be recollected,” he observes, “that in the days of ancient chivalry it was the practice to make solemn vows or engagements for the performance of some considerable enterprise. This ceremony was usually performed during some grand feast or entertainment, at which a roasted peacock or pheasant, being served up by ladies in a dish of gold or silver, was thus presented to each knight, who then made the particular vow which he had chosen, with great solemnity. When this custom had fallen into disuse, the peacock nevertheless continued to be a favourite dish, and was introduced on the table in a *pie*, the head, with gilded beak, being proudly elevated above the crust, and the splendid tail expanded. Other birds of smaller value were introduced in the same manner, and the recollection of the old peacock vows might occasion the less serious, or even burlesque, imitation of swearing not only by the bird itself, but also by the *pie*; and hence probably the oath *by cock and pie*.”—Vol. i. p. 472.

As all persons beneath the rank of an esquire were precluded, by the laws of chivalry, from taking any part in the celebration of justs and tournaments, while, at the same time, a strong desire of imitation was excited in the public mind, by the attractive nature of these diversions, it soon became an object with the commonality to establish something which might bear a striking resemblance to the favourite amusements of their superiors. Hence the origin of tilting at the quintain, which we have already noticed in the chapter on Rural Diversions, and of tilting at the ring and on the water; sports, of which even the Queen herself condescended not unfrequently to be a spectator.

Tilting at the ring was considered as the most respectable of the three amusements, and was generally practised as a preparatory exercise to the knightly feat of justing. The ring was suspended at a fixed height, in a sheath, by the contrivance of two springs, and the object of the tilter was, while riding at full speed, to thrust the point of his lance through the ring, drawing it, by the strength of his stroke, from its sheath, and bearing it away on the summit of his lance. In this pastime, the horses, as well as the men, required constant training and practice, and, on the day of contest, the palm of victory was adjudged to him who in three courses, for this number was allowed to each candidate, carried the point of his lance the oftenest through the ring.

Of these games the most vulgar, but the most productive of merriment, was that of tilting on the water, in which the combatants, standing in the centre of their respective boats, were armed with a lance and shield, and he was esteemed the conqueror, who, by a dexterous management of his weapon, contrived to strike his adversary in such a manner as to overturn him in the water, while he himself remained firm and stationary. With this curious exhibition it would appear that the Queen was highly gratified, on her visit to Sandwich, “where certain wallounds that could well swym, had prepared two boates, and in the middle of each boate was placed a borde, upon which borde there stood a man, and so they met together, with either of them a staff and a shield of wood; and one of them did overthrow another, at which the Queen had good sport.”*

To justing, and to tilting at the ring, some of the most remarkable relics of expiring chivalry, and of which the latter had attained to almost scientific precision

* Nichols's Progresses, vol. i. p. 56., the year 1573.

at the commencement of the seventeenth century, Shakspeare has several allusions in the course of his dramas.* The most striking of these refers to an accident which not unfrequently occurred, when a knight, unable to manage his horse with due skill, suffered it to deviate sideways in its career, the consequence of which was, that instead of breaking his lance in a direct line against his adversary's helmet, it was broken across his breast, a circumstance deemed highly dishonourable, as the result either of timidity or want of dexterity:—"O, that's a brave man!" says Celia, speaking of Orlando, in *As You Like It*, "he writes brave verses, speaks brave words, swears brave oaths, and breaks them bravely, quite traverse, athwart the heart of his lover; as a puny tilter, that spurs his horse but on one side, breaks his staff like a noble goose."—Act. iii. sc. 4.

It was about this period too, the close of the sixteenth century, that another remnant of romantic usage became nearly extinct. We allude to the profession of the Minstrel, which, until the year 1597, had been cherished or tolerated in this country, from an era as ancient as the conquest.

During the reign of Elizabeth, indeed, the character of the Minstrel, combining the offices of the poet, the singer, and the musician, and that of the Jestour, or mere reciter of tales and gestes, gradually lost their importance and respectability, and were no longer protected by the noble and the opulent. On the accession of the Queen, however, and for about twenty years afterwards, instances may be adduced where the Minstrel appears to have acted in his genuine capacity, that is, as the sole depository of the poems which he chaunted, and not, as was subsequently the case, the fabricator of songs and ballads merely for the press. The latest specimens of what may be termed the old Minstrelsy, Dr. Percy assigns to the years 1569 and 1572, when the ballads entitled "*The Rising in the North*," and "*Northumberland betrayed by Douglas*," were produced. Between the Minstrel-ballads and those written merely for the press, a marked difference was usually perceptible, the former exhibiting greater rudeness of language, with a more northern cast in their structure; greater irregularity in metre, and incidents more romantic, wild, and chivalric; while the latter presented altogether a southern dialect, more correct versification, incidents, though occasionally pathetic, comparatively tame and insipid, and a costume more modern and familiar. Of this last kind, were the numerous ballads of the reign of James the First, frequently collected together, and published under the appellation of "*Garlands*."

There is reason to suppose, notwithstanding the declining state of the minstrel tribe, that some attention was yet paid to their appearance and dress; that their ancient distinguishing costume was well known, and sometimes imitated, and that, especially in the prior half of the Elizabethan era, a peculiar garb was still attached to their office. We are warranted in these inferences by contemporary authority: Laneham, in his description of Elizabeth's entertainment at Killingworth Castle, in 1575, mentions his having been in company with a person who was to have performed the character of an ancient Minstrel before the Queen, "if meete time and place had been foound for it." This man, who was probably a member of the profession, entertained some worshipful friends, of which Laneham was one, with a representation of the part which he should have enacted at the Earl of Leicester's; and it is remarkable that this assumed minstrel is styled, "a squire minstrel of Middilsex, that travaild the cuntree thys soomer season unto fayrz and woorshipfull menz houzez;" a strong proof that the character, in all its full costume, was not considered as sufficiently bizarre and obsolete to render such an assertion improbable.

"A person very meete seemed he for the purpose; (we here drop the author's absurd orthography;) of a XLV years old, apparelled partly as he would himself. His cap off, his head seemly rounded tonster-wise; fair kembed, that with a sponge daintily dipt in a little capon's grease, was

* See *Comedy of Errors*, act iv. sc. 2. *Henry IV. Part I.* act ii. sc. 3. *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. sc. 1. *Love's Labour's Lost*, act v. sc. 2. *Taming of the Shrew*, act i. sc. 1.

finely smoothed to make it shine like a mallard's wing; his beard smugly shaven: and yet his shirt after the new trink, with ruffs fair-starched, sleeked, and glistering like a pair of new shoes: marshalled in good order: with a stetting stick, and stout that every ruff stood up like a wafer. A side gown of Kendal green, after the freshness of the year now; gathered at the neck with a narrow gorget, fastened afore with a white clasp and a keeper close up to the chin, but easily for heat to undo when he list: seemly begirt in a red caddis girdle; from that a pair of capped Sheffield knives hanging a to side (one on each side): out of his bosom drawn forth a lappet of his napkin, edged with a blue lace, and marked with a true love, a heart, and a D. for Damian; for he was but a bachelor yet.

"His gown had side sleeves down to midleg, slit from the shoulder to the hand, and lined with white cotton. His doublet-sleeves of black-worsted; upont hem a pair of poynets of tawny chamblet, laced along the wrist with blue threaden joints; a wealt toward the hand of fustian anapes: a pair of red neather stocks: a pair of pumps on his feet, with a cross cut at the toes for cornes; not new, indeed, yet cleanly blacked with soot, and shining as a shoeing horn. About his neck, a red ribband suitable to his girdle: his harp in good grace dependent before him: his wrest* tied to a green lace, and hanging by. Under the gorget of his gown a fair flagon chain of pewter (for silver); as a squire minstrel of Middlesex, that travelled the country this summer season, unto fairs and worshipful mens houses. From his chain hung a scutcheon, with metal and colour, resplendent upon his breast, of the ancient arms of Islington.—After three lowly courtesies, 'he' cleared his voice with a hem and reach, and spat out withal; wiped his lips with the hollow of his hand for filing his napkin, tempered a string or two with his wrest, and after a little warbling on his harp for a prelude, came forth with a solemn song, warranted for story out of King Arthur's acts."†

In 1592, Henry Chettle, describing Anthony Now-Now, an aged and celebrated minstrel of his own time, represents him as "an od old fellow; low of stature, his head covered with a round cap, his body with a tawney coate, his legs and feete truste uppe in leather buskins, his gray haire and furrowed face witnessed his age, his treble viol in his hand;"‡ from which it would appeare that even to the last the members of this tuneful tribe were distinguished by some peculiarity of dress.

In the mean time, however, they were becoming, through the dissoluteness of their manners, obnoxious to government, and contemptible in the public estimation. Stubbes, in the first edition of his *Anatomie of Abuses*, 1583, terms them a parcel of drunken sockets, and bawdy parasites, that "raunge the countries," he observes, "riming and singing of unclean, corrupt, and filthy songs in tavernes, ale-houses, innes, and other publike assemblies.—There is no ship," he exclaims, "so laden with merchandize, as their heads are pestred with al kinds of baudy songs, filthy ballades, and scurvy rimes, serving for every purpose, and for every company. For proof whereof," he subjoins, "who bee baudier knaves than they? who uncleaner than they? who more licentious, and looser minded than they? and brieflie, who more inclined to all kind of insolency and leudness than they?—I think that al good minstrelles, sober and chaste musitions, may dance the wild Moris through a needles eye." He subsequently adds that, notwithstanding their immorality, "every toune, citie, and countrey, is full of these minstrelles to pipe up a daunce to the devill."

That this description is not much exaggerated by the puritanical severity of its author, is evident from the language of Puttenham, a courtier and polite writer, who calls this degraded race "cantabanqui," singers "upon benches and barrells heads—minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a groat in taverns and ale-houses, and such other places of base resort;" a picture corroborated by the authority of Bishop Hall, who a few years afterwards, speaking of the exhilarating effect of his own satirical poetry, says it is

"Much better than a Paris-garden beare,
Or prating poppet on a theater,

* *Wrest*—the key with which the harp is tuned.

‡ Kind Harts Dreame, sig. B. 2.

† *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i.

Or Mimæ's whistling to his tabouret,
Selling a laughter for a cold meal's meat." *

The character which Shakspeare attributes to the minstrel race of this period, is in accordance with the preceding passages. In the original edition of his *Rape of Lucrece*, which appeared in 1594, he draws his heroine exclaiming,

" *Feast finding* minstrels, tuning my defame,
Will tie the hearers to attend each line."

The epithet in Italics very distinctly points out the vagrant life of these attendants on merriment and good cheer. They were accustomed to travel the country, in search of bride-ales, Christmas dinners, fairs, etc., and wherever they could get access to the halls of the gentry and nobility.

It is in the *Winter's Tale*, however, that the minstrel of our poet's age is but too faithfully depicted. In the person of Autolycus, whom we have already noticed, when describing the country wake, is to be found, in colours faithful to nature, the very object of Stubbes's satire, a composition very curiously blending the various functions of the minstrel, the pedlar, and the rogue.

No harshness therefore can be attributed to the act of Queen Elizabeth, which in 1597 nearly annihilated an occupation so vilely associated and degraded. In the fourth chapter of this statute the law enacts that "all fencers, bearwards, common players of enterludes, and minstrells, wandering abroad; all juglers, tinkers, pedlars, etc. shall be adjudged and deemed rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggers;" a clause which, very deservedly, put an end to a profession which, though once highly respectable and interesting, no longer had a claim to public support; a clause which enabled Dr. Bull to say, with much truth,

" Beggars they are with one consent,
And Rogues, by Act of Parliament." †

Of the use which Shakspeare made of the various romances, tales, and ballads which undoubtedly occupied a large portion of his library, an accurate estimate may be formed from a close inspection of his dramas. It will be found, that, with the exception of the Historical plays, derived either from English chronicles or translations of classic story, the residue of his dramatic productions may be traced to sources exclusively existing within the regions of romantic literature. As we shall have occasion, however, hereafter to notice the origin of each drama, as it passes before us in chronological succession, it will merely be necessary in this place, in order to afford some proof of his familiarity with these fictions, to select a few specimens of his allusion to them from the body of his plays.

That our poet was well acquainted with the celebrated Romance, entitled *Morte d'Arthur*, the most popular of its class, would have been readily admitted from the known course of his studies, even if he had not once alluded to it in the course of his works. In the Second Part, however, of *King Henry the Fourth*, he makes Shallow, vaunting of his youthful feats to Falstaff, say, "I was then Sir Dagonet in Arthur's show," (Act. iii. sc. 2.) a line upon which Mr. Douce observes, "Whatever part Sir Dagonet took in this show would doubtless be borrowed from Mallory's romance of the *Morte Arthur*, which had been compiled in the reign of Henry VII. What there occurs relating to Sir Dagonet was extracted from the excellent and ancient story of *Tristan de Leonnois*, in which Dagonet is represented as the fool of king Arthur; ‡ a character certainly well adapted to the powers of the worthy justice.

It should, however, be remarked, that the Arthur's show in this passage was not, what it might at first be supposed, an exact representation of the ancient

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 273. col. 1. Book iv. sat. 1.

† See Ritson's Ancient English Metrical Romances, vol. i. Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy, p. cxxiv.

‡ Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. p. 465.

chivalric costume of that romantic Prince and his knights, but principally an exhibition of Archery by a toxophilite society, of which Richard Robinson, the translator of the English Gesta, has given us an account under the title of "The Auncient Order Societie, and Unitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure and his knightly Armory of the Round Table. With a Threefold Assertion friendly in favour and furtherance of English Archery at this day." 1583. 4to. *

These city-worthies, to the number of fifty-eight, it would seem, had for some time assumed the arms and the names of the knights of the Round Table, and Robinson, who the year before had published a translation of Leland's *Assertio Arthvrii*, thought proper to dedicate his Ancient Order to M. Thomas Smith, Esq., the then Prince Arthur of this fellowship, and compliments him by deducing his society from the establishment of the round table in the reign of Edward the First.

"But touching your famous order and fellowship of knights in shooting, though in K. E. I. his time (ann. 1279) a valiant Knight and manly Mortimer at Kenelworth appointed a knightly game, which was called the Round Table of 100 knights and so manie Ladies (nameth not expressly shooting to be one) yet for exercise of armes thither came many warlike knightes of divers kingdomes. And the most famous and victorious king E. 3. builded at Winchester (ann. 1344) an house called the Round Table of an exceeding compasse to the exercise of like, or farre greater Chevalry therin:—So the most famous, prudent, politike, and grave prince K. Henry the 7 was the first Phenix in chusing out a number of chiefe Archers to give daily attendance upon his person, whom he named his Garde. But the high and mighty renowned prince his son, K. 8. (ann. 1509) not onely with great prowes and praise proceeded in that which his father had begun; but also added greater dignity unto the same, like a most roial renowned David, enacting a good and godly statute (ann. 33. H. 8. cap. 9.) for the use and exercise of shooting in every degree. And furthermore for the maintenance of the same laudable exercise in this honourable city of London by his gracious charter confirmed unto the worshipful citizens of the same, this your now famous order of Knights of Prince Arthures Round Table or Society: like as in his life time when he sawe a good Archer indeede, he chose him and ordained such a one for a knight of the same order." †

As this "friendly and franke fellowship of Prince Arthur's Knights," as Mulcaster terms it in his *Positions*, ‡ bore little resemblance to its celebrated archetype in any point of chivalric observance, beyond the name; and archery had ceased to be an object with government in a military light, and was considered indeed, in the reign of James I., as a mere pastime, the society, though respectable in the days of Robinson and Mulcaster, soon dwindled into contempt, an idle mockery of an institution which had originally been great and imposing.

In *Much Ado about Nothing*, our author very distinctly refers to another of Captain Cox's romances, *Huon of Bourdeaux*, a production of equal popularity with *Morte Arthure*, and which was translated into English by Lord Berners, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, § under the title of *Sir Hugh of Bourdeaux*. Benedict being informed of the approach of Beatrice, addresses Don Pedro in the following terms:—

"Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes, that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the farthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Prester John's foot; *fetch you a hair of the great Cham's beard*; do you any embassage to the Pigmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy." Act ii. sc. 1. The passage in Italics, together with the spirit of the context, will be discovered in the subsequent command and achievement.

"Thou must goe to the citie of Babylon to the Admiral Gaudisse, to bring thy hande full of the heare of his beard, and four of his greatest teeth. Alas, my lord, (quoth the *Barons*,) we see well you desire greatly his death, when you charge him with such a message." **

* British Bibliographer, No. II. p. 125.

† British Bibliographer, No. II. p. 126, 127.

‡ *Positions concerning the training up of Children*, 1581 and 1587. 4to. chap. xxvi.

§ The original, the "*Histoire de Huon de Bordeaux*," was ushered into the world at the Fair of Troyes in Champagne, in the first century of printing.

** *Huon of Bourdeaux*, chap. xvii.

“ He opened his mouth, and tooke out his foure great teeth, and then cut off his beard, and tooke thereof as much as pleased him.” *

This version of Lord Berners furnished Shakspeare with the name, though not with the character, of Oberon.

The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth supplies us with a reference to the ancient romance of “ Sir Bevis of Southampton.” In the combat between Horner and his servant Peter, the former exclaims—“ Peter, have at thee with a downright blow, as Bevis of Southampton fell upon Ascapart.” Act. ii. sc. 3.

This romance, which forms the fourth article in the Coventry Library, was once highly popular, though possessing little merit. It was printed by Pynson, and issued twice from the press of Copland, and once from that of East. It has been since frequently republished, in various forms, for the amusement of the juvenile part of the community.

Of the hero of the tale, Selden has left us the following notice in his notes on the Polyolbion :—“ About the Norman invasion was Bevis famous with the title of Earl of Southampton ; Duncton in Wiltshire known for his residence.—His sword is kept as a relique in Arundel Castle ; not equalling in length (as it is now worn) that of Edward III., at Westminster.†

Shakspeare has done further honour to this legend, by putting two lines of it into the mouth of Edgar. Bevis, being confined in a dungeon, was allowed neither meat not corn, but

“ Rattes and myce and such smal dere
Was his meate that seven yere ;”

a distich which the supposed madman in Lear has thus, almost verbally, adopted :—

“ But mice, and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom’s food for seven long year.”—Act iii. sc. 4.

Dr. Percy has observed that Shakspeare had doubtless often heard this metrical romance sung to the harp ; the popularity of these legends, indeed, was such that, towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign, most of them were converted into prose, a degradation which befel Sir Bevis, Sir Guy of Warwick, and many others of equal celebrity. To this last romance Shakspeare has an allusion in his King John, where the bastard speaks of

“ Colbrand the giant, that same mighty man.”—Act i. sc. 1.

the defeat of this Danish Goliath, in single combat, by Sir Guy, being one of the leading features of the story.

It is highly probable, that the achievement ascribed to King Richard, in this play, of tearing out the lion’s heart was immediately derived from a copy of the old metrical romance in the poet’s library. It is true that the chronicles of Fabian and Rastall have detailed this fiction, and there is no doubt, from the same authority ; but the metrical legend of Richard Cœur de Lion being one of the most popular of the Anglo-Norman romances, and having been thrice printed, twice by W. De Worde, and once by Will. Copland, there is much reason to conclude that an

* Chap. xlv. edit. of 1601. Lord Berners’s translation underwent three editions. The original has had the honour of giving birth to the Chef-d’œuvre of *Wieland*—“ the child of his genius,” observe the Monthly Reviewers, “ in moments of its purest converse with the all-beauteous forms of ideal excellence ;—the darling of his fancy, born in the sweetest of her excursions amid the ambrosial bowers of fairy-land ;—the OBERON,—an epic poem, popular beyond example, yet as dear to the philosopher as to the multitude ; which, during the author’s lifetime, has attained in its native country all the honours of a sacred book ; and to the evolution of the beauties of which, a Professor in a distinguished university has repeatedly consecrated an entire course of patronized lectures.” New Series, vol. xxiii. p. 576.

The beauties of Oberon are now accessible to the mere English scholar, through the medium of Mr. Sotheby’s version, which, though strictly faithful to the German, has the spirit and harmony of an original poem.

† Chalmers’s English Poets, vol. iv, p. 189. col. i.—Polyolbion, canto ii.

acknowledged lover, and collector, of this branch of literature would prefer taking his imagery from the poem itself, more especially if it rested upon his shelves.

It appears from this romance, that Richard not only tore out the heart of the lion, but, dipping it in salt, eat it before the eyes of the astonished king of Almain, a feat which instantly drew from His Majesty the peculiar appellation which designates the tale : —

“ Yevis, as I understand can,
This is a devil, and no man,
That has my strong lion y-slawe,
The heart out of his body drawe,
And has it eaten with good will !
He may be called, by right skill,
King y-christened of most renown,
Strong *Richard Cœur de Lion* ! ” *

The play of Henry the Fifth furnishes a reference to the fifth article in Laneham's catalogue of the Coxean collection. Fluellen compelling Pistol to eat his leek, tells him, — “ You called me yesterday, mountain-squire ; but I will make you to-day a squire of low degree.” — Act v. sc. 1.

This romance, which was licensed to John Kynge on the tenth of June, 1560, and printed by William Copland before 1570, was one of the most popular of the sixteenth century, and possesses some striking traits of manners, and several very curious poetical sketches. It is twice alluded to by Spenser in his *Faerie Queene*, and has been supposed, though probably without sufficient foundation, to have existed in manuscript anterior to the age of Chaucer. †

There are some scenes in Shakspeare which appear to have been originally derived from Oriental fable. Thus, in *Twelfth Night*, the leading ideas of Malvolio's soliloquy (act ii. sc. 5.), bear a strong resemblance, as Mr. Tyrwhitt observes, to those of Alnaschar, in “ *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* ; ” an observation which has drawn from Mr. Steevens the following curious and pertinent note : —

“ Many Arabian fictions had found their way into obscure Latin and French books, and from thence into English ones, long before any professed version of “ *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* ” had appeared. I meet with a story similar to that of Alnaschar, in “ *The Dialogue of Creatures Moralsed*,” bl. l. no date, but probably printed abroad : “ It is but foly to hope to moche of vanyteys. Whereof it is told in fablis that a lady uppon a tyme delyuered to her mayden a galone of mylke to sell at a cite. And by the waye as she sate and restid her by a dyche side, she began to thinke y' with ye money of the mylke she wolde bye an henne, the which shulde bring forth chekyns, and when they were grownyn to hennys she wolde sell them and by piggis, and eschaunge them into shepe, and the shepe into oxen ; and so whan she was come to richnesse she sholde be married right worshipfully unto some worthy man, and thus she rejoycid. And when she was thus marvelously comfortid, and ravished inwardely in her secrete solace thinkynge with how great joye she shuld be ledde towarde the churche with her husbond on horsebacke, she sayde to her self, Goo wee, go wee, sodaynelye she smote the grounde with her fote, myndyne to spurre the horse ; but her fote slypped and she fell in the dyche, and there laye all her mylke ; and so she was farre from her purpose, and never had that she hoped to have. Dial. 100, LL. ij. b.”

We may also refer the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew* to the same source, to “ *The Sleeper awakened*,” in the *Arabian Nights*, a tale which seems to have crept from its oriental fountain through every modern European language. Its earliest appearance in English that can now be traced, is derived from the information of Mr. Warton, who informs us that his friend Mr. Collins, the celebrated lyric poet, had in his possession a collection of short comic stories in prose, “ sett forth by mayster Richard Edwards, mayster of her Majesties revels,” and

* Vide Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, vol. ii. p. 201.

† This poet is conjectured to have thrown some ridicule on the Squire of Low Degree, in his rhyme of *Sir Thopas* ; but Ritson remarks, that this romance “ is never mentioned by any one writer before the sixteenth century ; nor is it known to be extant in manuscript ; and, in fact, the Museum copy is the only one that exists in print.” *Romances*, vol. iii. p. 345.

with the date of 1570. This book, which was printed in the black letter, contained the story of the Induction, and was, there is little doubt, the source whence Shakspeare and the author of the elder *Taming of the Shrew* drew their outline. A similar tale is the subject of a ballad in the Pepysian collection, which has been published by Percy, and it is to be found also in Sir Richard Barckley's "*Discourse on the Felicitie of Man*," 1598, in Goulart's "*Admirable and Memorable Histories*," translated by E. Grimstone, 1607; in Burton's "*Anatomie of Melancholy*," 1615; in "*The Apothegms of King James, King Charles, the Marquis of Worcester*," etc. 1658, and in Winstanley's "*Rarities*," 1684. Some of the Arabian Tales and some of the Fables of Pilpay may be traced in "*The Seven Wise Masters*," and in the English "*Gesta Romanorum*."

To romances of Italian origin and structure, such as were exhibited in English versions often mutilated and incorrect, our author's obligations are so numerous, particularly with regard to the formation of plot, that, referring to a future consideration of each play for further illustration on these subjects, we shall only remark in this place, that many of the faults which have been ascribed to Shakspeare's want of judgment in the conduct of his dramas, are attributable to the necessity he was under, either from want of power or want of time, of applying to versions and imitations in lieu of the originals; a species of accommodation which frequently led him to adopt the mistakes of a wretched translation, when a reference to the Italian would immediately have induced a better choice. This will account for many of the charges which Mrs. Lennox has brought against the poet, in respect to deficiency of skill in the arrangement of his incidents.*

The First Part of *King Henry the Fourth* presents us with an allusion to one of those Spanish romances which became so popular towards the close of Elizabeth's reign. Falstaff, in answer to the Prince, who had told him, that he saw no reason why he should "be so superfluous to demand the time of the day," replies, "Indeed, you come near me now, Hal: for we that take purses, go by the moon and seven stars; and not by Phœbus,—he, that wandering knight so fair." Act ii. sc. 2.

The romance to which this passage stands indebted, is entitled, in the best and most complete edition, "*Espeio de Principes, y Cavalleros. En el qual se cuentan immortales hechos de cavallero del febo*, etc. four parts, folio, and is the subject of the barber's eulogium in *Don Quixote*. "He (the Don) had frequent disputes with the priest of his village, who was a learned person, and had taken his degrees in Ciguenza, which of the two was the better knight, Palmerin of England, or Amadis de Gaul. But master Nicholas, barber-surgeon of the same town, affirmed, that none ever came up to the Knight of the Sun."

This production, the first part of which was translated into English, under the title of "*The Myrrour of Knighthood*," was well known in Shakspeare's time; the second part of the first book having been printed in the black letter, by Thomas Este, in 1585. The whole occupies three volumes in 4to., and in it the Knight of the Sun is represented not only as "most excellently faire," but as a prodigious wanderer; so that Falstaff, who, by an easy association, digresses from Phœbus to this solar knight-errant, has very compendiously combined his characteristics.

It is probable that the celebrated passage in *Hamlet's* soliloquy, where the prince speaks of

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns,"

Act iii. sc. 1.

may have been founded on a similar idea in the Spanish romance entitled "*Palmerin d'Oliva*." The translation of Palmerin was first printed in 1588, and in Part II., chap. 3, the reader must be struck with the following words,—"before he took his journey wherein no creature returneth againe." Now, as *Hamlet*,

* See *Shakspeare Illustrated*, by Mrs Lennox, 3 vols. 12.no. 1754.

according to the chronological arrangement of Mr. Malone, was not written until 1596, and Palmerin d'Oliva may certainly be reckoned among the most fashionable romances of its day, the conjecture is entitled to attention. It is necessary, however, to add, that we are altogether indebted for it to a learned and ingenious correspondent in the *British Bibliographer*, whose initial signature is W., and whose acquaintance with romantic lore appears to be equally accurate and profound.

To this gentleman we are under further obligation for the confirmation of a supposition made by Mr. Douce, who, commenting on this part of Hamlet's soliloquy, refers it to a passage in the "*History of Valentine and Orson*," and adds,—"It is probable that there was an edition of Valentine and Orson in Shakspeare's time, though none such is supposed now to remain." *

Such an edition, it appears, is in the possession of the correspondent of Sir Egerton Brydges, who has given us a description of it, together with the following title, as drawn from the colophon:—"The historie of the two valyante brethren Valentyne and Orson, sônes vn to the Emperour of Græce. Imprinted at London over a gaynst St. Margaretes Church in Lothbery be William Coplande." Small 4to. b. l. sig. I. i. 5. wood cuts. † The antiquity of this copy, though without date, is ascertained by the circumstance, that Wm. Copland, the printer, died between the years 1568 and 1569; and there is even reason to suppose, that this is but a re-impression, for, after the table of contents, a short note states, "Here endeth the table *newly correcte*."

The reference of Mr. Douce is to page 63 of the edition of 1694, in which occurs a sentence which undoubtedly bears a striking resemblance to the lines of Shakspeare:—"I shall send some of you here present into such a country, that you shall scarcely ever return again to bring tydings of your valour." ‡

That our great poet was as well versed in the pages of Valentine and Orson, as have been the school-boys of this country for the last century, is our firm belief. "It would be difficult," says the possessor of Copland's edition, "to find a reader of the present day, who had not in the hour of childhood voted a portion of his scanty stipend to the purchase of '*Valentine and Orson*,' and withdrawn for a few hours from more laborious exercises, or amusements, to peruse its fascinating pages;" and equally difficult it would have been, in Shakspeare's days, to have found a person of liberal education, who had not devoted a portion of his leisure to the perusal of this simple but energetic romance.

From the numerous corresponding passages, however, cited by our author's commentators, from the period of Catullus to the seventeenth century, it would seem that the idea, and even the terms in which it has been expressed, may be considered as a kind of common property, and consequently rather a mark of coincidence than imitation.

Of the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney, the best pastoral romance, and one of the most popular books of its age, we cannot be surprised that Shakspeare should have been an ardent admirer, and that occasionally he should have been indebted to it for an incident or an image. The first scene of the fourth act, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which Valentine accepts the captainship of a band of outlaws, appears to be founded on that part of the *Arcadia*, where Pyrocles, released from prison by the Helots, consents to be their leader and captain. §

More certainly is the episode of Gloster and his sons, in *King Lear*, derived from the same work, the first edition of which, published in 1590, being divided into chapters, exhibits one with this title:—"The pitiful state and storie of the Paphlagonian unkinde king, and his kinde sonne: first related by the sonne, then

* Douce's *Illustrations*, vol. ii. p. 240.—Mr. Douce observes, that the "oldest (edition) we know of is that of 1649, printed by Robert Ibbitson. In 1586, *The old book of Valentine and Orson* was licensed to T. Purfoot." P. 240.

† *British Bibliographer*, No. V. p. 469, 470.

§ *Arcadia*, book i. p. 29. 7th edit.

‡ *Illustrations*, vol. ii. p. 240.

by the blind father." The subsequent editions omit the divisions into chapters, and in the copy before us, which is the seventh impression, the story commences at page 132, being part of the second book. As no other source for this narrative than the *Arcadia* has hitherto been traced, and as the similarity of incident is considerable, there can be little doubt but that this portion of *King Lear* must confess its obligation to the romance.

The appellation, also, given to Cupid, in a passage in *Much Ado about Nothing*, is evidently to be referred to a line in the *Arcadia*. Don Pedro, speaking of Benedict, says, "he hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bow-string, and the little *hangman* dare not shoot at him." (Act iii. sc. 2.) It has been conjectured, that the word in Italics should be henchman, a page or attendant; but to decide the question it is only necessary to quote the words of Sidney:—

"Millions of yeares this old drivell Cupid lives;
While still more wretch, more wicked he doth prove:
Til now at length that Jove him office gives,
At Juno's suite, who much did Argus love,
In this our world a *hangman* for to be
Of all those fooles that will have all they see."*

If, from this catalogue of allusions, our author's intimacy with the romances of his age may be considered as proved, his familiarity with the ballads and songs of the same period will not be deemed less extensive, or less admitting of demonstration. Throughout his dramas, indeed, a peculiar partiality for these popular little pieces is very manifest; he delights to quote them, wherever he can find a place for their introduction, and his own efforts in this line of poetry are often of the utmost simplicity and beauty.

How strongly he felt this predilection for the strains of our elder minstrelsy, and how exquisitely he has expressed his attachment to them, must be in the recollection of all who have ever read, or seen performed, his admirable comedy of the *Twelfth Night*, in which the Duke exclaims,—

"Give me some music:—but that piece of song,
That old and antique song we heard last night,
Methought it did relieve my passion much;
More than light airs and recollected terms,
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times:—
Mark it, Cæsario; it is old, and plain:
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids, that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chaunt it; it is silly sooth,
And dallies with the innocence of love,
Like the old age."

Act ii. sc. 4.

Before we notice, however, the ballads which Shakspeare has quoted, or to which he has alluded, it will be satisfactory, if, to the article specified in Captain Cox's "*Bunch of Ballets and Songs*," we add a few more of similar popularity, and from a source equally rare and authentic. In the "*British Bibliographer*," Mr. Haslewood has given us a description of the fragment of a tract in his possession, entitled "*The World's Folly*" printed, as he concludes, from the type, before 1600, and from which, "as every allusion," he justly observes, "to our early ballads is interesting," he has obliged his readers with some very curious quotations.

"The author," he remarks, "appears to describe the purgatory of Folly. He wanders from room to room, and to each new character assigns a ballad, that may be presumed was distinguished for popularity. A man, whose credit had decayed by trusting servants, and had commenced botcher, 'had standing by him, for meate and drinke, a pot of strong ale, which was often at his nose, that it kept his face in so good a colour, and his braine in so kinde a heate, as forgetting part of his forepassed pride, in the good humour of grieving patience, made him with a

* *Arcadia*, book ii. p. 153. 1629.

hemming sigh, ilfavouredly singe the ballad of Whilom I was : to the tune of *Tom Tinker*. A old man, shaking with palsy, who, 'having beene a man of some possessions, and with too fat feeding of horses, too high keeping of hawkes, and too much delighting in banquetinges, through lacke of husbandrie, was forced to leave himself without lande; . . . after many a deepe sighe, with a hollow voice, in a solemne tune, with a heavie heart, fell to sing the song of Oken leaves began wither : to the tune of Heavilie, heavilie. A dapper fellow that in his youth had spent more than he got, on his person, 'fell to singe the ballad of the blinde beggar : to the tune of *Heigh ho*. The general lover, having no further credit with beauty, howled out the dittie of *When I was faire and young* : to the tune of *Fortune*. The next is whimsically described as 'one that was once a virgin, had beene a little while a mayde, knew the name of a wife, fell to be a widdow,' and finally a procuress; 'she would sing the *Lamentation of a sinner* : to the tune of *Welladaye*.' A decayed prostitute, who had become laundress to the house, 'stood singing the ballet of *All in a greene willowe* : to the famous tune of *Ding Dong*.' A man with good personage, with a froward wife, 'hummed out the balled of *the breeches* : to the tune of *Never, never*.' His termagant spouse drewe from her pocket 'a ballad of *the tinker's wife that beate her husbände*.' To the last character in the fragment is also given Raleigh's ballad. He was 'one that had beene in love, sat looking on his mistresse picture, making such a legge to it, writing such verses in honour to it, and committing such idolatrie with it, that poore man, I pittied him : and in his behalfe sorrowed to see how the Foole did handle him : but there sat he, hanging his head, lifting up the eyes, and with a deepe sigh, singing the ballad of *Come live with me and be my love*, to the tune of *adieu my deere*' " *

It is, notwithstanding, to the dramas of our poet, that we must look for more copious intimations relative to the ballad-poetry of the sixteenth century, and of the first ten years of the reign of James the First. The list which we shall collect from his works, in the order in which they are usually published, will sufficiently evince his love for these productions, and, at the same time, afford a pretty accurate enumeration of those which were esteemed the most popular of his age.

Yet, in forming this catalogue of Shakspearean ballads and songs, it may be necessary to premise, that it is not our intention to comment on the original pieces of our author in this branch of poetry, which will fall under consideration in a subsequent chapter ; but merely to confine our notices to his quotations from and allusions to the minstrel strains of others. We commence, therefore, with the ballad of Queen Dido, which the poet had no doubt in view, when he represents Gonzalo in the *Tempest* so familiar with her name and history. (Act ii. sc. 1.) That this was a favourite song with the common people appears from a passage in a scarce pamphlet quoted by Mr. Ritson, and published in 1604. "O you ale-knights, you that devoure the marrow of the mault, and drinke whole ale-tubs into consumptions; that sing *Queen Dido* over a cupp, and tell strange newes over an ale-pot." † Dr. Percy, who has published a correct copy of this old ballad from his folio MS. collated with two different printed copies, both in black letter, in the Pepysian collection, terms it "excellent," an epithet justly merited, for, though blended with the manners of a Gothic age, it is certainly both pathetic and interesting.

Mrs. Ford, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, speaking of Falstaff's proposals, says, that his disposition and his words "do no more adhere and keep place together than the hundredth psalm to the tune of *Green Sleeves*." This seems to have been a very popular song about 1580, for it is licensed several times during this year, and entered on the book of the Stationers' Company, under the titles of "A newe northerne dittie of the Lady Green Sleeves," and "A new Northerne Song of Green Sleeves, beginning.

"The bonniest lass in all the land."

It is mentioned by Beaumont and Fletcher in "The Loyal Subject," but is supposed to be now longer extant.

* British Bibliographer, No. X. pp. 559, 560. This fragment, says Mr. Haslewood, "is in black letter one sheet, and bears signature C."

† Jacke of Dover, his quest of Inquirie, or his privy Search for the veriest foole in England, 4to.

In the same play, Falstaff alludes to another old song, which was entitled *Fortune my foe* (act iii. sc. 7), enumerating all the misfortunes incident to mankind through the instability of fortune. Of this ballad, which is mentioned by Brewer in his "*Lingua*,"* twice by Beaumont and Fletcher,† and by Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*,‡ the tune is said to be the identical air now known by the song of "*Death and the Lady*:" and the first stanza, observes Mr. Malone, was as follows:—

" *Fortune, my foe, why dost thou frown on me?
And will my fortune never better be?
Wilt thou, I say, for ever breed my pain,
And wilt thou not restore my joys again?* "

Sir Hugh Evans, in the first scene of the third act of this play, quotes, though from his trepidation very inaccurately, four lines from two of the most popular little madrigals at the close of the sixteenth century, entitled "*The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*," and "*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*;" the first written by Christopher Marlowe, and the second by Sir Walter Raleigh. These had been attributed, however, to Shakspeare, in consequence of their being included in a copy of his smaller poems printed by William Jaggard in 1599. This edition being published during the life-time of the poet, gave currency to the ascription; but in the year following Marlowe's poem appeared in "*England's Helicon*," with his name annexed, and Raleigh's with his usual signature of *Ignoto*;§ and Isaac Walton, in the first edition of his "*Compleat Angler*," printed in 1653, has attributed these pieces to the same authors, describing them as "that smooth song, which was made by Kit Marlowe, now at least fifty years ago; and—an Answer to it, which was made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger days—old fashioned poetry," he adds, "but choicely good; I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age."** Had Marlowe written nothing but this beautiful song, he would yet have descended to posterity as an excellent poet; the imitations of it have been numerous.

The *Twelfth Night* presents us with a variety of fragments of ballads, songs, and catches; Sir Andrew Ague-cheek calls for the catch of "*Thou Knave*," of which the words and musical notes are given by Sir J. Hawkins (Act ii. sc. 3); Sir Toby compares Olivia to "*Peg—a Ramsay*," a licentious song mentioned by Nash among several other ballads, such as "*Rogero, Basilino, Turkelony, All the Flowers of the Broom, Pepper is black, Green Sleeves, Peggie Ramsay*;" and immediately afterwards, this jovial knight quotes several detached lines from as many separate ballads; for instance, "*Three merry men be we; There dwelt a man in Babylon, lady, lady; O the twelfth day of December; Farewell, dear heart, since I must needs be gone*." Of these the first was a burden common to many ancient songs, and is called in "*The old Wives Tale*," by George Peele, 1595, an Old Proverb, and is thus given:—

" *Three merrie men, and three merrie men,
And three merrie men be wee;
I in the wood, and thou on the ground,
And Jack sleepes in the tree:* "

an association which acquired such notoriety as to become the frequent sign of an ale-house, under the appellation of "*The Three Merry Boys*." The second is the first line and burden of a ballad which was licensed by T. Colwell, in 1562, under the title of "*The goodly and constant wyfe Susanna*." It is preserved in the Pepysian collection, and the first stanza of it has been quoted by Dr. Percy in his *Reliques*; †† the burden "*lady, lady*," is again alluded to by Mercutio in

* *Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii. p. 219. col. 1.

† *Customs of the Country*, act. i. sc. 1. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, act v.

‡ *Edit.* 1632. p. 576.

§ *England's Helicon*. 3d edit.. reprint of 1812. p. 214, 215.

** *Compleat Angler*, edit. 1808. p. 147.

†† Vol. i. p. 220.

Romeo and Juliet (act ii. sc. 4). The third has not been traced to its source, but the fourth, and the subsequent lines, are taken, with a little variation, from "Corydon's Farewell to Phillis," published in a little black letter miscellany, called "The Golden Garland of Princely Delights," and reprinted entire by Dr. Percy. *

In act iv. sc. 2, the clown is introduced singing part of the two first stanzas of a song which has been discovered among the ancient MSS. of Dr. Harrington of Bath, and there ascribed, though perhaps not correctly, to Sir Thomas Wyatt. It is evident that Shakspeare trusted to his memory in the quotation of these popular pieces, for most of them deviate, in some degree, from the originals; in the present instance, the first two lines, as given by the clown,

"Hey Robin, jolly Robin,
Tell me how thy lady does,"

are substituted for the opening stanza of the old song:—

"A Robyn,
Jolly Robyn,
Tell me how thy leman doeth,
And thou shalt knowe of myn."

The commencement of a madrigal, the composition of William Elderton, is sung by Benedict, in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

"The god of love,
That sits above," &c.

and a song beginning in a similar manner, is mentioned by Mr. Ritson, to be in "Bacchus' Bountie," 4to, bl. l. 1593; Elderton's production was parodied by a puritan of the name of Birch, under the title of "The Complaint of a Sinner."

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, a sweet air, as Armado terms it, commencing with the word "Concolinel," is sung by Moth (act iii. sc. 1), but no further intimation is given; and in another part of the same comedy, the burden of an ancient ditty is chaunted by Roseline and Boyet (act iv. sc. 1). In *As You Like It*, Touchstone quotes a stanza from a ballad of which the first line is "O sweet Oliver," and which appears to be the same with the ballad of

"O sweete Olyver,
Leave me not behinde thee,

entered by Richard Jones, on the books of the Stationers' Company, August 6th, 1584; and in the subsequent act, Orlando alludes to a madrigal under the title of *Wit whither wilt*. Act iv. sc. 1.

All's Well that Ends Well affords but two passages from the minstrel poesy of the day, which are put into the mouth of the clown; one of these is evidently taken from a ballad on the Sacking of Troy, and the other seems to be the chorus of a song on courtship or marriage. Act. i. sc. 3.

From the *Taming of the Shrew* we collect the initial lines of two apparently very popular ballads; the first beginning "Where is the life that late I led,"† which is likewise quoted by Ancient Pistol, and referred to in "A gorgeous Gallery of gallant Inventions," 4to. 1578; there is also a song or sonnet with this title, observes Mr. Malone, in "a handeful of pleasant Delites, containing

* Reliques, vol i. p. 220.

† Act iv. sc. 1.—There appears to be allusions to two catches in this scene. Grumio exclaims "*fire, fire; cast on no water*," which Judge Blackstone traces to the following old catch in three parts:—

"Scotland burneth, Scotland burneth.
Fire, fire; — Fire, fire;
Cast on some more water."

Grumio a little afterwards calls out, "*Why, Jack boy! ho boy!*" the beginning, as Sir John Hawkins asserts, of an old round in three parts, of which he has given us the musical notes.

sundrie new Sonets," etc. 1584, where we read of "Dame Beautie's replie to the lover late at libertie, and now complaineth himselfe to be her captive, intituled, Where is the life that late I led :

"The life that erst thou led'st, my friend,
Was pleasant to thine eyes," &c.

The second fragment with which Petruchio has favoured us, commencing

"It was the friar of orders grey,
As he forth walked on his way," Act iv. sc. 1.

has given rise to one of the most pleasing and pathetic of modern ballads, founded on a professed introduction of as many of our poet's ballad fragments as could consistently be adapted. "Dispersed through Shakspeare's plays," says the ingenious associator, "are innumerable little fragments of ancient ballads, the entire copies of which could not be recovered. Many of these being of the most beautiful and pathetic simplicity, the editor was tempted to select some of them, and with a few supplemental stanzas to connect them together, and form them into a little Tale."* That much taste and poetic spirit, together with a very successful effort in combination, have been exhibited in this little piece, the public approbation has unequivocally decided.

To the character of Autolycus, in the Winter's Tale, a very humorous exemplar of the fallen state of the minstrel tribe, we are indebted for some illustration of the prevalency of ballad-writing at the commencement of the reign of James the First. Most of the songs attributed to this adroit rogue, are, there is reason to think, the composition of Shakspeare, with the exception of the catch beginning "Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way (act iv. sc. 2) ; but, in his capacity of ballad-vender, he throws considerable light on the subject to which these motley strains were devoted. He is represented as having ballads of all descriptions, and the "prettiest love-songs for maids"—"and where some stretched-mouthed rascal would, as it were, mean mischief, and break a foul gap into the matter, he makes the maid to answer, Whoop, do me no harm, good man ; puts him off, slights him, with Whoop, do me no harm, good man."† Accordingly at the Fair he is applied to for these precious wares:—

* Percy's Reliques, vol. i. p. 259.

† Act iv. sc. 3.—We shall add, in this note, in order to complete the catalogue, all the fragments of ancient minstrelsy that have escaped our enumeration in the text.

In Troilus and Cressida, Pandarus, lamenting the approaching departure of Cressida, expresses his sorrow by quoting an old song beginning—

"O heart, o heart, o heavy heart,
Why sigh'st thou without breaking."

Hamlet, bantering Polonius, quotes part of the first stanza of a ballad entitled, *Jephtha, Judge of Israel*. This has been published by Dr. Percy, retrieved, as he relates, from utter oblivion by a lady, who wrote it down from memory as she had formerly heard it sung by her father.—*Percy's Reliques*, vol. i. p. 189.

It is probable that Hamlet, who appears to have been well versed in ballad-lore, has again introduced two morsels from this source, in his dialogue with Horatio on the conduct of the king at the play : they strongly mark his triumph in the success of his plan for unmasking the crimes of his uncle :—

"Why let the stricken deer go weep," &c.

"For thou dost know, O Damon dear," &c.

Iago in the drunken scene with Cassio, in the view of adding to his exhilaration, sings a portion of two songs ; the first apparently a chorus,—

"And let me the canakin, clink, clink," &c.

the second,

"King Stephen was a worthy peer."

from a humorous ballad of Scotch origin, preserved by Percy in his Reliques, vol. i. p. 204.

In Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio, in the following passage, alludes to two ballads of considerable notoriety :—

"Young Adam Cupid, he that shot so trim,
When king Cophetua lov'd the beggar maid ;"

the first line referring to the celebrated ballad of "Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of

Clo. What hast here? ballads?

Mop. Pray now, buy some: I love a ballad in print, a'-life: for then we are sure they are true.

Aut. Here's one to a very doleful tune, How a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden; and how she longed to eat adder's heads, and toads carbonadoed.

Mop. Is it true, think you?

Aut. Very true; and but a month old.

Dor. Bless me from marrying a usurer!

Aut. Here's the midwife's name to't, one mistress Taleporter; and five or six honest wives that were present: why should I carry lies abroad?

Mop. 'Pray you now, buy it.

Clo. Come on, lay it by: And let's first see more ballads; we'll buy the other things anon.

Aut. Here's another ballad, Of a fish, that appeared upon the coast, on Wednesday the four-score of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids: it was thought she was a woman, and was turned into a cold fish, for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her: the ballad is very pitiful, and as true.

Dor. Is it true, think you?

Aut. Five justices' hands at it; and witnesses, more than my pack will hold.

Clo. Lay it by too: Another.

Aut. This is a merry ballad; but a very pretty one.

Mop. Let's have some merry ones.

Aut. Why, this is a passing merry one; and goes to the tune of, *Two maids wooing a man*: there's scarce a maid westward, but she sings it; 'tis in request, I can tell you."—Act iv. sc. 3.

The request, in fact, for these popular pieces of poetry was then infinitely greater than has since been obtained in more modern times; not a murder, or an execution, not a battle or a tempest, not a wonderful event or a laughable adventure, could occur, but what was immediately thrown into the form of a ballad, and the muse supplied what humble prose now details to us among the miscellaneous articles of a newspaper; a statement which is fully confirmed by the observation of another character in this very play, who tells us that "such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour, that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it."—Act v. sc. 2.

In the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, Falstaff enters a room, in the Boar's Head Tavern, singing the first two lines of a ballad which Dr. Percy has reprinted under the title of "Sir Lancelot Du Lake." This, which is merely a metrical version of three chapters from the first part of Morte Arthur, is quoted imperfectly by the knight, owing to the interruptions attending his situation; the opening lines of the ballad are,

" When Arthur first in court began,
And was approved king,"

which Falstaff mutilates and alters, by omitting the last word of the first line, and converting approved into worthy; the version and quotation, it may be remarked, are strong proofs of the popularity of the romance.

To the admirably drawn character of Silence in this play, we are indebted for several valuable fragments of popular poesy. This curious personage, who, when sober, has not a word to say, is no sooner exhilarated by the circling glass, than he chaunts forth an abundance of unconnected stanzas from the minstrelsy of his times. Having nothing original in his ideas, no fund of his own on which to draw, he marks his festivity by the vociferous repetition of scraps of catches, songs, and glees. We may, therefore, conceive the poet to have appropriated to this simple justice in his cups, the most generally known and, of course, the favourite, convivial songs of the age. They are of such a character, indeed, as to

Cloudesly," and the second to "King Cophetua and the Beggar-Maid;" popular pieces which are again the objects of allusion in "Much Ado about Nothing," act i.; and in the Second Part of Henry IV. act v. sc. 3.—*Percy's Reliques* vol. i. pp. 154, 198.

The same play will afford us three or four additional references; Mercutio, ridiculing the old Nurse, gives us a ludicrous fragment commencing "An old hare hoar," vol. xx. p. 116; and Peter, after calling for two songs called "Heart's ease," and "My heart is full of woe," attempts to puzzle the musicians by asking for an explanation of the epithet *silver* in the first stanza of "A Song to the Lute in Musicke," written by Richard Edwards, in the "Paradise of Daintie Devises," and commencing,

"Where griping griefs the hart would wounde."

warrant the belief, that there was not a hall in Shakspeare's days but what had echoed to these jovial strains; a conclusion which almost imperatively calls for the admission of a few, as specimens of the vocal hilarity of our ancestors, when warmed, according to Shallow's confession, by "too much sack at supper."

"*Sil.* Do nothing but eat and make good cheer, (*Singing.*)

And praise heaven for the merry year;

When flesh is cheap and females dear,*

And lusty lads roam here and there,

So merrily,

And ever among so merrily.

Fal. There's a merry heart!—Good master Silence, I'll give you a health for that anon.—

Sil. Be merry, be merry, my wife's as all;†

For women are shrews, both short and tall:

'Tis merry in hall, when beards wag all,

And welcome merry shrove-tide.

Be merry, be merry, &c.

Fal. I did not think, master Silence had been a man of this mettle.

Sil. A cup of wine, that's brisk and fine,

And drink unto the leman mine;

And a merry heart lives long-a.

Fal. Well said, master Silence.

Sil. And we shall be merry;—now comes in the sweet of the night.

Fal. Health and long life to you, master Silence.

Sil. Fill the cup and let it come;

I'll pledge you a mile to the bottom."

Act v. sc. 3.

After drinking another bumper, and singing another song, allusive to the rights of pledging, "Do me right, And dub me knight"; and quoting the old ballad of Robin Hood, and the Pindar of Wakefield, master Silence is carried to bed, fully saturated with sack and good cheer.

A character equally versed in minstrel lore, and equally prodigal of his stock, though wanting the excuse of inebriation, has been drawn by Beaumont and Fletcher, in the person Old Merry thought in their "Knight of the Burning Pestle," printed in the year 1613; but, in point of nature and humour, it is a picture which falls infinitely short of Shakspeare's sketch.

Many of the old songs, or rather the fragments, of them, which are scattered through the dramas of our poet, either proceed from the professed clown or fool of the play, or are given as the wild and desultory recollections of derangement, real or feigned; the ebullitions of a broken heart, and the unconnected sallies of a disordered mind.

Shakspeare's fools may be considered, in fact, as exact copies of the living manners and costume of these singular personages, who, in his era, formed a necessary part of the household establishment of the great. To the due execution of their functions, a lively fancy, and a copious fund of wit and sarcasm, together with an unlimited license of uttering what imagination and the occasion prompted, were essential; but it was likewise required, that bitterness of allusion, and asperity of remark, should be softened by the constant assumption of a playful and unintentional manner. For this purpose, the indirect method of quotation, and generally from ludicrous songs and ballads, is resorted to, with the evident intention of covering what would otherwise have been too naked and too severely felt. Thus, in an old play, entitled "A very mery and pythie Comedy, called, The longer thou livest the more Foole thou art," printed about 1580, the appearance of a character of this description is prefaced by the following stage-note:—"Entreth Moros, counterfaiting a vaine gesture and a foolish countenance, synging the foote of many songs, as fools were wont."

The simple yet sarcastic drollery of the fool, and the wild ravings of the madman, have been alike employed by Shakspeare, to deepen the gloom of distress. In the

* *Dear* is here to be remembered in its double sense.—*Farmer.*

† *My wife's as all*, that is, as all women are.—*Steevens.*

tragedy of Lear it is difficult to ascertain whether the horrors of the scene are more heightened by the seeming thoughtless levity of the former, or by the delirious imagery of the latter. The greater part of the bitterly sportive metres, attributed to the fool, in this drama, appears evidently to have been written for the character; and as the reliques drawn from more ancient minstrelsy seem rather the foot or burden of each song than the commencement, and are at the same time of little poetical value, we shall forbear enumerating them. The fragments, however, allotted to Edgar are both characteristic and apparently initial; the line which Mr. Steevens asserts to have seen in an old ballad,

“Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind,” *

is so impressive as absolutely to chill the blood; and the legendary pieces beginning

“Saint Withold footed thrice the wold,”

and

“Child Rowland to the dark tower came,” Act iii. sc. 4.

are reliques which well accord with the dreadful peculiarity of his situation. The two subsequent quotations are from pastoral songs, of which the first,

“Come o’er the bourn, Bessy, to me,” Act iii. sc. 6.

as Mr. Malone observes, has a marked propriety, alluding to an association then common; for in a description of beggars, published in 1607, one class of these vagabonds is represented as counterfeiting madness;

————— “they were so frantique
They knew not what they did, but every day
Make sport with stick and flowers like an antique;—
One calls herself poor Besse, the other Tom.”

The second seems to have been suggested to the mind of Edgar by some connection, however distant and obscure, with the business of the scene. Lear fancies he is trying his daughters; and the lines of Edgar, who is appointed one of the commission, allude to a trespass which takes place in consequence of the folly of a shepherd in neglecting his charge,—the lines appear to be the opening stanza of a lyrical pastoral. “A shepherd,” remarks Dr. Johnson, “is desired to pipe, and the request is enforced by a promise, that though his sheep be in the corn, *i. e.* committing a trespass by his negligence—yet a single tune upon his pipe shall secure them from the pound.

“Sleepest, or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
Thy sheep shall take no harm.”

If the assumed madness of Edgar is heightened by the casual repetition of these artless strains, how is the real distraction of the heart-broken Ophelia augmented in its pathos by a similar appeal! The interesting fragments which she sings, certainly do not produce their effect, as Sir Joshua Reynolds imagined, by marking an “utter insensibility to her own misfortunes;” for they manifestly refer both to her father’s death, and to her own unfortunate attachment, their influence over the heart being felt as the consequence of this indirect allusion.

Of the first three fragments, which appear to be parts of the same ballad, and, as the king observes, are a “conceit upon her father,” the two prior have been beautifully incorporated by Dr. Percy in his “Friar of Orders Gray:”

“How should I your true love know,
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.”

* This finely descriptive line, Dr. Percy has interwoven in his ballad of *The Friar of Orders Gray*.

He is dead and gone, lady,
 He is dead and gone;
 At his head a grass-green turf,
 At his heels a stone."

Act iv. sc. 5.

The first line of the third,

"White his shroud as the mountain snow,"

has been parodied by Chatterton, in the Mynstrelle's Songe in OElla,

"Whyte his rode as the sommer snowe."

The subsequent songs, beginning

"Good morrow, 'tis Saint Valentine's day,

and

"By Gis, and by Saint Charity,"

were, there is little doubt, suggested to the fair sufferer's mind, by an obscure and distant association with the issue of her unfortunate amour, a connection, however, which is soon dissipated by reverting to the fate of her father, the scene closing with two fragments exquisitely adapted to unfold the workings of her mind on this melancholy event.

"They bore him barefac'd on the bier—
 And in his grave rain'd many a tear."

"And will he not come again?
 And will he not come again?
 No, no, he is dead,
 Go to thy death-bed,
 He never will come again, &c."

Act iv. sc. 5.

passages of which Dr. Percy has admirably availed himself in his "Friar of Orders Gray," and to which the Mynstrelle's song in OElla is indebted for its pathetic burden:

"Mie love ys dedde,
 Gonne to his deathe-bedde,
 Alle underre the wyllowe tree."*

The vacillation of poor Ophelia amid her heavy afflictions is rendered strikingly apparent by the insertion of two ballad lines between the stanzas last quoted, which again manifestly allude to her lover:—

"*Oph.* You must sing, *Down a-down, an you call him a down-a.* O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.——"

"For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy."

We may remark that the expression "O how the wheel becomes it!" is meant to imply the popularity of the song, that

"The *spinsters* and the knitters in the sun
 Do use to *chaunt* it,

a custom which, as exercised in the winter, is beautifully exemplified by Mr. Malone, in a passage from Sir Thomas Overbury's characters, 1614:—"She makes her hands hard with labour, and her head soft with pittie; and when winter evenings fall early, sitting at her merry *whee*le, she sings a defiance to the giddy wheele of fortune."

In the churchyard scene of this play, one of the grave-diggers, after amusing himself and his companion by queries, which, as Mr. Steevens observes, "perhaps composed the chief festivity of our ancestors by an evening fire," sings three

* Poems, supposed to have been written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley, and others. Cambridge edition, 1794, p. 70.

stanzas, though somewhat corrupted either by design or accident, of "A dyttie or sonet made by the lord Vaus, in the time of the noble quene Marye, representing the image of death." This poem was originally published in Tottel's edition of Surrey and Wyatt, and the Poems of Uncertain Authors; the earliest poetical miscellany in our language, and first printed in 1557 under the title of "Songes and sonettes by the right honourable Henry Howard, late earl of Surrey, and other." To this very popular collection, which underwent many editions during the sixteenth century,* Slender alludes, in the Merry Wives of Windsor, where he exclaims, "I had rather than forty shillings, I had my book of Songs and Sonnets here;" from which we may conclude that this was the fashionable manual for lovers in the age of Elizabeth. Lord Vaux's lines have been reprinted by Dr. Percy, who remarks on the apparent corruptions of Shakspeare's transcript, that they were "perhaps so designed by the poet himself, the better to suit the character of an illiterate clown."

No fragment of our minstrel poetry has been introduced by Shakspeare with greater beauty and effect, than the melancholy ditty which he represents Desdemona as singing, under a presentiment of her approaching fate:

"*Des.* My mother had a maid call'd—Barbara;
She was in love; and he, she lov'd, prov'd mad,
And did forsake her: she had a song of—willow,
An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it: That song to-night,
Will not go from my mind; I have much to do,
But to go hang my head all at one side,
And sing it like poor Barbara."

Act iv. sc. 3.

Of this song of willow, ushered in with such a powerful appeal to the heart, Dr. Percy has given us a copy in his reliques; it is in two parts, and proves that the poet has not only materially altered the few lines which he quotes, but has changed also the sex of its subject; for in the original in the Pepys collection, it is entitled "A Lover's Complaint, being forsaken of his Love."

From the ample, we may almost say complete, enumeration, which we have now given, of the fragments selected by Shakspeare from the minstrel-poetry of his country, together with the accompanying remarks, may be formed, not only a tolerably accurate estimate of the most popular songs of this period, but a clear idea of the use to which Shakspeare has applied them.† They will be found, in fact, with scarcely any exceptions, either elucidatory of the business of the scene, illustrative of the progress of the passions, or powerfully assistant in developing the features and the shades of character.

It will appear also, from the view which has been taken of romantic literature, as comprehending all the branches noticed in this chapter, that its influence, in the age of our poet, was great and universally diffused: that he was himself, perhaps more than any other individual, if we except Spenser, addicted to its study and partial to its fictions; and that, if we take into consideration, what will hereafter be mentioned, the bases of his various plays, he may be affirmed to have availed himself of its stores often with great skill, and with as much frequency as the nature of the province which he cultivated would admit.

* Namely in 1565, 1567, 1569, 1574, 1585, 1587, &c.

† To form a complete enumeration of the songs of the Elizabethan era, it would be necessary not only to consult *all* the dramatic writers of this age, but to acquire a perfect series of the very numerous *Collections of Madrigals* which were published during the same period.

CHAPTER IV.

Cursory View of Poetry, with the Exception of the Drama, during the Age of Shakspeare.

THE space which elapsed between the birth and the death of Shakspeare, from April 1564 to April 1616, a period of fifty-two years, may be pronounced, perhaps, the most fertile in our annals, with regard to the production of poetical literature. Not only were the great outlines of every branch of poetry chalked out with skill and precision, but many of its highest departments were filled up and finished in a manner so masterly as to have bid defiance to all subsequent competition. Consequently, if we take a survey of the various channels through which the genius of poetry has been accustomed to diffuse itself, it will be found, that, during this half century every province had its cultivators; that poems, epic and dramatic, historic and didactic, lyric and romantic, that satires, pastorals, and sonnets, songs, madrigals, and epigrams, together with a multitude of translations, brightened and embellished its progress.

On a subject, however, so productive, and which would fill volumes, it is necessary that, in consonancy with the limits and due keeping of our plan, the utmost solicitude for condensation be observed. In this chapter, accordingly, which, to a certain extent, is meant to be introductory to a critical consideration of the miscellaneous poems of Shakspeare, the dramatic writers are omitted; a future section of the work being appropriated to a detail of their more peculiar labours for the stage.

After a few general observations, therefore, on the poetry of this era, it is our intention to give short critical notices of the principal bards who flourished during its transit; and with the view of affording some idea of the extensive culture and diffusion of poetic taste, an alphabetical table of the minor poets, accompanied by slight memoranda, will be added. An account of the numerous Collections of Poetry which reflect so much credit on this age, and a few remarks and inferences, more particularly with respect to Shakspeare's study of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries in miscellaneous poetry, will complete this portion of our subject.

The causes which chiefly contributed to produce this fertility in poetical genius may, in a great measure, be drawn from what has been already remarked under the heads of superstition, literature, and romance.

The sun of philosophy and science, which had just risen with the most captivating beauty, and which promised a meridian of uncommon splendour, had not yet dissipated those mists that for centuries had enveloped and darkened the human mind. What remained, however, of the popular creed, was much less gross and less contradictory to common experience, than what had vanished from the scroll; these reliques were, indeed, such as either appealed powerfully to a warm and creative imagination, or were intimately connected with those apprehensions which agitate the breast of man when speculating on his destiny in another and higher order of existence.

Under the first of these classes may be included all that sportive, wild, and terrific imagery which resulted from a partial belief in the operations of fairies, witches, and magicians, and the reveries of the alchemist, the rosicrusian, and the astrologer; and under the second will be found, what can scarcely be termed superstition in the customary sense, that awful and mysterious conception of the spiritual world, which supposes its frequent intervention, through the agency either of departed spirits, or superhuman beings.

The opinions which prevailed with regard to these topics in the days of Shakspeare, were such as exactly suited the higher regions of poetry, without giving any violent shock to the deductions of advancing philosophy. The national credulity had been, in fact, greatly chastised, through the efforts of enquiry and research, and though it may still appear great to us, was in perfect accordance with the progress of civilisation, and certainly much better calculated for poetic purposes than has been any subsequent though purer creed.

The state of literature, too, was precisely of that kind which favoured, in a very high degree, the nurture of poetical genius. The vocabulary of our language was rich, beyond all example, both in natives and exotics; not only in "new grafts of old withered words,"* but in a multitude of expressive terms borrowed from the learned languages; and this wealth was used freely and without restriction, and without the smallest apprehension of censure.

An enthusiastic spirit for literary acquisition had been created and cherished by the revival, the study, and the translation of the ancient classics; and through this medium an exhaustless mine of imagery and illusion was laid open to our vernacular poets.

Nor were these advantages blighted or checked by the fastidious canons of dictatorial criticism. Puttenham's was the only "Art of poetry" which had made its appearance, and, though a taste for discussion of this kind was rapidly advancing, the poet was yet left independent of the critic; at liberty to indulge every flight of imagination, and every sally of feeling; to pursue his first mode of conception, and to adopt the free diction of the moment.

The age of chivalry and romance, also, had not yet passed away; the former, it is true, was verging fast towards dissolution, but its tone was still exalting and heroic, while the latter continued to throw a rich, though occasionally a fantastic light over every species of poetic composition. In short, the unrestricted copiousness of our language, the striking peculiarities of our national superstition, the wild beauties of Gothic invention, and the playful sallies of Italian fiction, combined with a plentiful infusion of classic lore, and operating on native genius, gave origin, not only to an unparalleled number of great bards, but to a cast of poetry unequalled in this country for its powers of description and creation, for its simplicity and energy of diction, and for its wide dominion over the feelings.

If we proceed to consider the versification, economy, and sentiment of the Elizabethan poetry, candour must confess, that considerable defects will be found associated with beauties equally prominent, especially in the first and second of these departments. We must be understood, however, as speaking here only of rhymed poetry, for were the blank verse of our dramatic poets of this epoch included, there can be no doubt but that in versification likewise the palm must be awarded to Shakspeare and his contemporaries. Indeed, even in the construction of rhyme, the inferiority of our ancestors is nearly, if not altogether, confined to their management of the pentameter couplet; and here, it must be granted, that, in their best artificers of this measure, in the pages of Daniel, Drayton, and Browne, great deficiencies are often perceptible both in harmony and cadence, in polish and compactness. It has been said by a very pleasing, and, in general, a very judicious critic, "the older poets disdained stooping to the character of syllable-mongers; as their conceptions were vigorous, they trusted to the simple provision of nature for their equipment; and though often introduced into the world ragged, they are always healthy."† Now versification is to poetry what colouring is to painting, and though by no means among the higher provinces of the art, yet he who disdains its cultivation, loses one material hold upon the reader's attention; for, though plainness and simplicity of garb best accord with

* Preface to *Gondibert*. Vide Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. vi. p. 351.

† Headley's *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry*, vol. i. Introduction, p. 19. edit. 1810.

vigour, sublimity, or pathos of conception, raggedness can never coincide in the production of any grand or pleasing effect.

It is remarkable, however, that, in lyrical composition, the poets of Elizabeth's reign, so far from being defective in harmony of metre, frequently possess the most studied modulation; and numbers of their songs and madrigals, as well as many stanzas of their longer poems constructed on the model of the Italian octava rima, exhibit in their versification so much high-finishing, and such an exquisite polish, as must render doubtful, in this province at least, the assumed superiority of modern art.

A more striking desideratum in the poetry of this era has arisen from a want of economy in the use of imagery and ornament, and in the distribution of parts as relative to a whole. That relief, which is produced by a judicious management of light and shade, appears to have been greatly neglected; the eye, after having been fatigued by an unsubdued splendour and warmth of style, suddenly passes to an extreme poverty of colouring, without any intermediate tint to blend and harmonize the parts; in short, to drop the metaphor, after a prodigal profusion of imagery and description, the exhausted bard sinks for pages together into a strain remarkable only for its flatness and imbecility. To this want of union in style, may be added an equal defalcation in the disposition, connection, and dependency of the various portions of an extended whole. These requisites, which are usually the result of long and elaborate study, have been successfully cultivated by the moderns, who, since the days of Pope, have paid a scrupulous attention to the mechanism of versification, to the consonancy and keeping of style, and to the niceties and economy of arrangement.

We can ascribe, however, to the poets of Elizabeth's reign the greater merit of excelling in energy and truth of sentiment, in simplicity of diction, in that artless language of nature which irresistibly makes its way to the heart. To excite the emotions of sublimity, of pity, an appeal to the artificial graces of modern growth will not be found successful; on the contrary, experience has taught us, that in the higher walks of poetry, where sensations of grandeur and astonishment are to be raised, or where the passions in all their native vigour are to be called forth, we must turn to the earlier stages of the art, when the poet, unshackled by the overwhelming influence of venerated models, unawed by the frowns of criticism, and his flow of thought undiverted by any laborious attention to the minutiae of diction and cadence, looked abroad for himself, and drew fresh from the page of surrounding nature, and from the workings of his own breast, the imagery, and the feelings, which he was solicitous to impress. In consequence of this self-dependence, this appeal to original sources, the poetry of the period under our notice possesses a strength, a raciness, and verisimilitude which have since very rarely been attained, and which more than compensate for any subordinate defects in the ornamental departments of metre, or style.

It is conceivable, indeed, that a poet may arise, who shall happily combine, even in a long poem of the highest class, the utmost refinements of recent art, with the originality, strength, and independency of our elder bards; it is a phenomenon, however, rather to be wished for than expected, as the excellencies peculiar to these widely separated eras appear to be, in their highest degree, nearly incompatible. Yet is the attempt not to be given up in despair; in short poems, especially of the lyric species, we know that this union has been effected among us; for Gray, to very lofty flights of sublimity, has happily united the utmost splendour of diction, and the utmost brilliancy of versification; and even in a later and more extended instance, in "The Pleasures of Hope" by Mr. Campbell, we find some of the noblest conceptions of poetry clothed in metre exquisitely sweet, and possessing at the same time great variety of modulation, and a considerable share of simplicity in its construction.

If, however, upon the large scale, which the highest cast of poetry demands,

the studied harmony of later times be found incapable of coalescing with effect, there can be no doubt what school we should adopt; for who would not prefer the sublime though unadorned conception of Michael Angelo to the glowing colouring even of such an artist as Titian?

Of the larger poems of the age of Shakspeare, the defects may be considered as of two kinds, either apparent only, or real; under the first may be classed that want of high-finishing which is the result, partly of its incompatibility with greatness of design, and partly as the effect of a just taste; for much of the minor poetry of the reign of Elizabeth, as hath been previously observed, is polished even to excess; while under the second are to be placed the positive defects of want of union in style, and want of connection and arrangement in economy; omissions not resulting from necessity, and which are scarcely to be atoned for by any excellencies, however transcendent.

It is creditable to the present age, that in the higher poetry several of our bards have in a great degree reverted to the ancient school; that, in attempting to emulate the genius of their predecessors, they have judiciously adopted their strength and simplicity of diction, their freedom and variety of metre, preserving at the same time, and especially in the disposition of their materials, and the keeping of their style, whatever of modern refinement can aptly blend with or heighten the effect of the sublime, though often severely chaste outline, of the first masters of their art.

That meretricious glare of colouring, that uniform though seductive polish, and that monotony of versification, which are but too apparent in the school of Pope, and which have been carried to a disgusting excess by Darwin and his disciples, not only vitiate and dilute all development of intense emotion, but even paralyse that power of picturesque delineation, which can only subsist under an uncontrolled freedom of execution, where, both in language and rhythm, the utmost variety and energy have their full play. He who in sublimity and pathos has made the nearest approach to our three immortal bards, Spenser, Shakspeare and Milton, and who may, therefore, claim the fourth place in our poetical annals, the lamented Chatterton; and he who, in the present day, stands unrivalled for his numerous and masterly sketches of character, and for the truth, locality, and vigour of his descriptions, the poet of Marmion and of Rokeby, are both well known to have built their fame upon what may be emphatically termed the old English school of poesy. The difference between them is, that while both revert to the costume and imagery of the olden time, one adheres, in a great measure, to the language of his day, while the other must be deemed a laborious though not very successful imitator of the phraseology and extrinsic garb of the remote period to which, for no very laudable purpose, he has assigned his productions.

These few remarks on the poetry of our ancestors being premised, the critical notices to which we have alluded, may with propriety commence; and in executing this part of the subject, as well as in the tabular form which follows, an alphabetical arrangement will be observed.

I. BEAUMONT, SIR JOHN. Though the poems of this author were not published, yet were they written, during the age of Shakspeare, and consequently demand our notice in this chapter. He was the elder brother of Francis the dramatic poet, and was born at Gracedieu, in Leicestershire, in 1582. He very early attached himself to poetical studies, and all his productions in this way were the amusements of his youthful days. Of these, the most elaborate is entitled "Bosworth Field," a very animated and often a very poetical detail of the circumstances which are supposed immediately to precede and accompany this celebrated struggle. The versification merits peculiar praise; there is an ease, a vigour, and a harmony in it, not equalled, perhaps, by any other poet of his time; many of the couplets, indeed, are such as would be distinguished for the beauty of their construction, even in the writings of Pope. An encomium so strong as this may require some proofs for its support, and among the number which might

be brought forward, three shall be adduced as specimens not only of finished versification, but of the energy and heroism of the sentiments which pervade this striking poem.

“ There he beholds a high and glorious throne,
Where sits a king by lawrell garlands knowne,
Like bright Apollo in the Muses’ quires,
His radiant eyes are watchfull heavenly fires;
Beneath his feete pale Envie bites her chaine,
And snaky Discord whets her sting in vaine.”

Ferrers, addressing Richard, exclaims, —

“ I will obtaine to-day, alive or dead,
The crownes that grace a faithfull souldiers head.
‘ Blest be thy tongue,’ replies the king, ‘ in thee
The strength of all thine ancestors I see,
Extending warlike armes for England’s good,
By thee their heire, in valour as in blood.’ ”

On the flight of Catesby, who advises Richard to embrace a similar mode of securing his personal safety, the King indignantly answers,

“ Let cowards trust their horses’ nimble feete,
And in their course with new destruction meete;
Gaine thou some houres to draw thy fearefull breath:
To me ignoble flight is worse than death.”

Of the conclusion of Bosworth Field, Mr. Chalmers has justly observed, that “ the lines describing the death of the tyrant may be submitted with confidence to the admirers of Shakspeare.”

The translations and miscellaneous poems of Sir John include several pieces of considerable merit. We would particularly point out Claudian’s Epigram on the Old Man of Verona, and the verses on his “ dear sonne Gervase Beaumont.”

Sir John died in the winter of 1628, aged forty-six.

2. BRETON, NICHOLAS. Of this prolific poet few authenticated facts are known. His first publication, entitled, “ A small handfull of fragrant flowers,” was printed in 1575; if we therefore allow him to have reached the age of twenty-one before he commenced a writer, the date of his birth may, with some probability, be assigned to the year 1554. The number of his productions was so great, that a character in Beaumont and Fletcher’s “ Scornful Lady,” declares that he had undertaken “ with labour and experience the collection of those thousand pieces—of that our honour’d Englishman, Nich. Breton.” (Act ii.) Ritson has given a catalogue of twenty-nine, independent of his contributions to the “ Phoenix Nest” and “ England’s Helicon,” and five more are recorded by Mr. Park in the *Censura Literaria*. * Most of these are poetical, some a mixed composition of rhyme and prose, and a few entirely prose; they are all extremely scarce, certainly not the consequence of mediocrity or want of notice, for they have been praised by Puttenham, † Meres, ‡ and Phillips; and one of his most beautiful ballads is inserted in “ The Muse’s Library,” 1740. After a lapse of twenty-five years, Dr. Percy recalled the attention of the public to our author by inserting in his *Reliques* the same piece which Mrs. Cowper had previously chosen; § in 1801 Mr. Ellis favoured us with eight specimens, from his pamphlets and “ England’s Helicon,” ** and Mr. Park has since added two very valuable extracts to the number. †† These induce us to wish for a more copious selection, and at the same time enable us to declare, that as a lyric and pastoral poet he possessed, if not a splendid, yet a pleasing and elegant flow of fancy, together with great sweetness

* Vol. ix. p. 163.

† Vide *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 47.

** *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, vol. ii. p. 240.

† *Arte of English Poesie*, reprint of 1811. p. 49.

§ *Percy’s Reliques*, vol. iii. p. 62.

†† *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. pp. 159, 161.

and simplicity of expression, and a more than common portion of metrical harmony.

He is supposed, on the authority of an epitaph in the church of Norton, a village in Northamptonshire, to have died on the 22d of June, 1624.*

3. BROWNE, WILLIAM, was born at Tavistock, in Devonshire, in 1590, and, there is reason to suppose, began very early to cultivate his poetical talents; for in the first book of his "*Britannias Pastorals*," which were published in folio, in 1613, when in his twenty-third year, he speaks of himself, "as weake in yeares as skill"†, which leads to the supposition that his earlier pastorals were written before he had attained the age of twenty. Indeed, all his poetry appears to have been written previous to his thirtieth year. In 1614, he printed in octavo, "*The Shepherd's Pipe*," in seven eclogues; in 1616, the second part of his "*Britannias Pastorals*" was given to the public, and in 1620, his "*Inner Temple Mask*" is supposed to have been first exhibited.

Browne enjoyed a large share of popularity during his life-time; numerous commendatory poems are prefixed to the first edition of his pastorals; and, in a copy of the second impression of 1625, in the possession of Mr. Beloe, and which seems to have been a presentation copy to Exeter College, Oxford, of which Browne was a member and Master of Arts, there are thirteen adulatory addresses to the poet, from different students of this society, and in the handwriting of each. Among his earliest eulogists are found the great characters Selden, Drayton, and Jonson, by whom he was highly respected both as a poet and as a man; and as a still more imperishable honour, we must not forget to mention, that he was a favourite with our divine Milton.

Until lately, however, he has been under little obligation to subsequent times; nearly one hundred and fifty years elapsed before a third edition of his poems employed the press; this came out in 1772, under the auspices of Mr. Thomas Davies, and, with the exception of some extracts in Hayward's *British Muse*, this long interval passed without any attempt to revive his fame, by any judicious specimens of his genius.‡ A more propitious era followed the republication of Davies; in 1787, Mr. Headley obliged us with some striking proofs of, and some excellent remarks on, his beauties; in 1792, his whole works were incorporated in the edition of the poets, by Dr. Anderson; in 1801, Mr. Ellis gave further extension to his fame by additional examples, and in 1810 his productions again became a component part of a body of English poetry in the very elaborate and comprehensive edition of the English poets, by Mr. Chalmers.

Still it appears to us, that sufficient justice has not, since the era of Milton, been paid to his talents; for, though it be true, as Mr. Headley has observed, that puerilities, forced allusions, and conceits, have frequently debased his materials; yet are these amply atoned for by some of the highest excellencies of his art; by an imagination ardent and fertile, and sometimes sublime; by a vivid personification of passion; by a minute and truly faithful delineation of rural scenery; by a peculiar vein of tenderness which runs through the whole of his pastorals, and by a versification uncommonly varied and melodious. With these are combined a species of romantic extravagancy which sometimes heightens, but more frequently degrades, the effect of his pictures. Had he exhibited greater judgment in the selection of his imagery, and greater simplicity in his style, his claim on posterity would have been valid, had been general and undisputed. Browne is conjectured by Wood to have died in the winter of 1645.§

* Shaw's *Staffordshire*, vol. i. p. 442. Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 143.

† Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. vi. p. 268. col. 2.

‡ It is sufficient praise, however, to remark, that Milton, both in his *L'Allegro* and his *Lycidas*, is under many obligations to our author.

§ We are told by Prince, in his "*Worthies of Devonshire*," that as Browne "had honoured his country with his sweet and elegant Pastorals, so it was expected, and he also entreated a little farther to grace it, by his drawing out the line of his poetic ancestors, beginning in Joseph Iscanus, and ending in himself." Had this design been executed, how much more full and curious had our information been with regard to

4. **CHALKHILL, JOHN.** This poet was the intimate friend of Spenser, a gentleman, a scholar, and, to complete the encomium, a man of strict moral character. He was the author of a pastoral history, entitled, "Thealma and Clearchus;" but "he died," relates Mrs. Cooper, "before he could perfect even the Fable of his poem, and, by many passages in it, I half believe, he had not given the last hand to what he has left behind him. However, to do both him and his editor justice, if my opinion can be of any weight, 'tis great pity so beautiful a relique should be lost; and the quotations I have extracted from it will sufficiently evidence a fine vein of imagination, a taste far from being indelicate, and both language and numbers uncommonly harmonious and polite." *

The editor alluded to by Mrs. Cooper was the amiable Isaac Walton, who published this elegant fragment in 8vo, in 1683, when he was ninety years old, and who has likewise inserted two songs by Chalkhill in his "Complete Angler." †

The pastoral strains of Chalkhill merit the eulogium of their female critic; the versification, more especially, demands our notice, and may be described, in many instances, as possessing the spirit, variety, and harmony of Dryden. To verify this assertion, let us listen to the following passages; describing the Golden age, he informs us,

Their sheep found cloathing, earth provided food,
And Labour drest it as their wills thought good:
On unbought delicacies their hunger fed,
And for their drink the swelling clusters bled:
The vallies rang with their delicious strains,
And Pleasure revell'd on those happy plains."

How beautifully versified is the opening of his picture of the Temple of Diana!

" Within a little silent grove hard by,
Upon a small ascent, he might espy
A stately chapel, richly gilt without,
Beset with shady sycamores about:
And, ever and anon, he might well hear
A sound of music steal in at his ear
As the wind gave it Being: so sweet an air
Would strike a Syren mute and ravish her."

Pourtraying the cell of an Enchantress, he says,

" About the walls lascivious pictures hung,
Such as whereof loose Ovid sometimes sung.
On either side a crew of dwarfish Elves,
Held waxen tapers taller than themselves:
Yet so well shap'd unto their little stature,
So angel-like in face, so sweet in feature;
Their rich attire so diff'ring, yet so well
Becoming her that wore it, none could tell
Which was the fairest —."

Muses Library, p. 317, 319, 327.

Mr. Beloe, in the first volume of his *Anecdotes*, p. 70, has given us a Latin epitaph on a John Chalkhill, copied from Warton's *History of Winchester*. This inscription tells us, that the person whom it commemorates died a Fellow of Winchester College, on the 20th of May, 1679, aged eighty; and yet Mr. Beloe, merely from similarity of name and character, contends that this personage must have been the Chalkhill of Isaac Walton; a supposition which a slight retrospection as to dates would have proved impossible. Walton, in the title-

Shakspeare and his contemporaries, and how much is it to be lamented that so noble a scheme was relinquished.

Since these critical notices were written, Sir Egerton Brydges has favoured the world with some hitherto unpublished poems of Browne; productions which not only support the opinions given in the text, but which tend very considerably to heighten our estimation of the genius and imagination of this fine old bard.

* *Muses Library*, 1741. p. 315.

† Bagster's edit. 1808. p. 156, 276.

page of Thealma and Cleafarchus, describes Chalkhill as an acquaintance and friend of Edmund Spenser; now as Spenser died in January, 1598, and the subject of this epitaph, aged 80, in 1679, the latter must consequently have been born in 1599, the year after Spenser's death! The coincidence of character and name is certainly remarkable, but by no means improbable or unexampled.

5. CHAPMAN, GEORGE, who was born in 1557, and died in 1634, aged seventy-seven, is here introduced as the principal translator of his age; to him we are indebted for Homer, Musæus, and part of Hesiod. His first published attempt on Homer appeared in 1592,* under the title of "Seaven Bookes of the Shades of Homer, Prince of Poets;" and shortly after the accession of James the First, the entire Iliad was completed and entitled, "The Iliads of Homer, Prince of Poets. Never before in any language truly translated. With a comment upon some of his chief places: done according to the Greeke."

This version, which was highly prized by his contemporaries, is executed in rhymed couplets, each line containing fourteen syllables; a species of versification singularly cumbrous and void of harmony; and, notwithstanding this protracted metre, fidelity is, by no means, the characteristic of Chapman. He is not only often very paraphrastic, but takes the liberty of omitting, without notice, what he could not comprehend. It has been asserted by Pope, that a daring fiery spirit, something like what we might imagine Homer himself to have written before he arrived to years of discretion, animates his translation, and covers his defects; an opinion which seems rather the result of partiality than unbiassed judgment; for though Chapman is certainly superior to his successor Hobbes, and occasionally exhibits some splendid passages, he must be considered by every critic of the present day as, in general, coarse, bombastic, and often disgusting; a violator, indeed, in almost every page, of the dignity and simplicity of his original.

The magnitude and novelty of the undertaking, however, deserved and met with encouragement, and Chapman was induced, in 1614, to present the world with a version of the Odyssey. This is in the pentameter couplet; inferior in vigour to his Iliad, but in diction and versification more chaste and natural. Of his Musæus and his Georgics of Hesiod, we shall only remark that the former was printed in 1616, the latter in 1618, and that the first, which we have alone seen, does not much exceed the character of mediocrity. As an original writer, we shall have to notice Chapman under the dramatic department, and shall merely add now, that he was, in a moral light, a very estimable character, and the friend of Spenser, Shakspeare, Marlowe, Daniel, and Drayton.

6. CHURCHYARD, THOMAS. This author merits notice rather for the quantity than the quality of his productions, though a few of his pieces deserve to be rescued from utter oblivion. He commenced a writer, according to his own account,† in the reign of King Edward the Sixth, and as Wood informs us, that at the age of seventeen he went to seek his fortune at court, and lived four years with Howard, Earl of Surry, who died 1546, it is probable that he was born about 1524. Shrewsbury had the honour of producing him, and he continued publishing poetical tracts until the accession of James the First. Ritson has given us a catalogue, which might be enlarged, of seventeen of his publications, with dates, from 1558 to 1599, independent of a variety of scattered pieces; some of these are of such bulk as to include from twelve to twenty subjects, and in framing their titles the old bard seems to have been very partial to alliteration; for we have "Churchyards Chippes, 1575; Churchyards Choice, 1579; Churchyards Charge, 1580; Churchyards Change; Churchyards Chance, 1680; Churchyards Challenge, 1593; and Churchyards Charity, 1595."‡ In the "Mirror

* See Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 83. Ritson has erroneously dated this publication 1598.

† In his "Challenge." he tells us, that his first publication was "a book named 'Davie Dicars Dream, in King Edward's daies.'"

‡ This publication, which was likewise called "A Muscally Consort of heavenly Harmonie," is not mentioned by Ritson.

for Magistrates," first published in 1559, he contributed "The Legend of Jane Shore," which he afterwards augmented in his "Challenge," by the addition of twenty-one stanzas; this is perhaps the best of his poetical labours, and contains several good stanzas. His "Worthiness of Wales," also, first published in 1587, and reprinted a few years ago, is entitled to preservation. This painstaking author, as Ritson aptly terms him, died poor on April 4th, 1604, after a daily exertion of his pen, in the service of the Muses, for nearly sixty years.

7. CONSTABLE, HENRY, of whom little more is personally known, than that he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1579; * that he was compelled to leave his native country from a zealous attachment to the Roman Catholic religion, and that venturing to return, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, but released towards the close of 1604. Constable possessed unrivalled reputation with his contemporaries as a writer of sonnets; Jonson terms his muse "ambrosiack;" in "The Return from Parnassus," 1606, we are told that

" Sweet Constable doth take the wondring ear
And lays it up in willing prisonment; "†

and Bolton calls him "a great master in English tongue," and adds, "nor had any gentleman of our nation a more pure, quick, or higher delivery of conceit; witness, among all other, that Sonnet of his before his Majesty's Lepanto." In consequence of these encomia more modern authors have prolonged the note of praise; Wood describes him as "a noted English poet;" Hawkins, as the "first, or principal sonneteer of his time," and Warton, as "a noted sonnet-writer."

To justify the reputation thus acquired, we have two collections of his sonnets still existing; one published in 1594, under the title of "Diana, or the excellent conceitful sonnets of H. C., augmented with divers quatorzains of honorable and learned personages, devided into viij Decads;" and the other a manuscript in the possession of Mr. Todd, consisting of sonnets divided into three parts, each part containing three several arguments, and every argument seven sonnets.‡

From the specimens which we have seen of his Diana, and from the sonnet extracted by Mr. Todd from the manuscript collection, there can be little hesitation in declaring, that the reputation which Constable once enjoyed, was built upon no stable foundation, and that mediocrity is all which the utmost indulgence of the present age can allow him.

8. DANIEL, SAMUEL, a poet and historian of no small repute, was born near Taunton, in Somersethire, in 1562. Having received a classical education at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and being afterwards enabled to pursue his studies under the patronage of the Earl of Pembroke's family, he became the most correct poet of his age. He commenced author as early as 1585, by a translation of Paulus Jovius's Discourse of rare Inventions; but his first published poems appear to have been his Delia, a collection of Sonnets, with the complaint of Rosamond, 1592. He continued to write until nearly the close of his life, for the Second Part of his History of England was published in 1618, and he died on the 14th of October, 1619.

Of the poetry of Daniel, omitting for the present all notice of his dramatic works, the most important are his "Sonnets to Delia," the "History of the Civil war," the "Complaint of Rosamond," and the "Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius;" the remainder consisting of occasional pieces, and principally of Epistles to his friends and patrons.

The Sonnets are not generally constructed on the legitimate or Petrarchan model; but they present us with some beautiful versification and much pleasing imagery.

* Vide Bibliographia Poetica, p. 169.

† Todd's Milton, 2d edit. vol. vi. p. 439.

‡ Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 49. col. 1.

The "Civil Wars between the two houses of Lancaster and York," the first four books of which were published in 1595, and the eighth and last in 1609, form the *magnum opus* of Daniel, and to which he looked for fame with posterity. That he has been disappointed, must be attributed to his having too rigidly adhered to the truth of history; for aspiring rather at the correctness of the annalist than the fancy of the poet, he rarely attempts the elevation of his subject by any flight of imagination, or digressional ornaments. Sound morality, prudential wisdom, and occasional touches of the pathetic, delivered in a style of then unequalled chastity and perspicuity, will be recognised throughout his work; but neither warmth, passion, nor sublimity, nor the most distant trace of enthusiasm can be found to animate the mass. In the "Complaint of Rosamond," and in the "Letter from Octavia," he has copied the manner of Ovid, though with more tenderness and pathos than are usually found in the pages of the Roman.

In short, purity of language, elegance of style, and harmony of versification, together with an almost perfect freedom from pedantry and affectation, and a continual flow of good sense and just reflection, form the merits of Daniel, and resting on these qualities he is entitled to distinguished notice, as an improver of our diction and taste; but to the higher requisites of his art, to the fire and invention of the creative bard, he has few pretensions.

Daniel was the intimate friend of Shakspeare, Marlowe, Chapman, Camden, and Cowel; and was so highly esteemed by the accomplished Anne, Countess of Pembroke, that she not only erected a monument to his memory in Beckington church, Somersesstshire, but in a full length of herself, at Appleby Castle in Cumberland, had a small portrait of her favourite poet introduced. This partiality seems to have sprung from a connection not often productive of attachment; Daniel had been her tutor when she was only thirteen years old, and in his poem he addresses an epistle to her at this early age, which, as Mr. Park has justly said, "deserves entire perusal for its dignified vein of delicate admonition." "Dissatisfied with the opinions of his contemporaries as to his poetical merit, which appears to have been similar to the estimate that we have just given, he relinquished the busy world, and spent the closing years of his life in the cultivation of a farm.

9. DAVIES, SIR JOHN, was born at Chisgrove in Wiltshire, in 1570. Though a lawyer of great eminence, he is chiefly known to posterity through the medium of his poetical works. His "Nosce Teipsum," or poem on the Immortality of the Soul, on which his fame rests, was published in 1599, and not only secured him the admiration of his learned contemporaries, among whom may be recorded the great names of Camden, Harrington, Jonson, Selden, and Corbet, but accelerated his professional honours; for being introduced to James in Scotland, in order to congratulate him on his accession to the throne of England, the king, on hearing his name, enquired if he was Nosce Teipsum?" and being answered in the affirmative, graciously embraced him, and took him into such favour, that he soon made him his Solicitor, and then Attorney-General in Ireland.

Besides this philosophical poem, the earliest of which our language can boast, Sir John printed, in 1596, a series of Epigrams, which were published at Middleburg, at the close of Marlowe's translation of Ovid's Epistles, and in the same year the first edition of his "Orchestra, or a poeme of dauncing;" these, with twenty-six acrostics on the words Elizabetha Regina, printed in 1599, and entitled "Hymns of Astræa," complete the list of his publications.

His "Nosce Teipsum" is a piece of close reasoning in verse, peculiarly harmonious for the period in which it appeared. It possesses, also, wit, ingenuity, vigour and condensation of thought, but exhibits few efforts of imagination, and nothing that is either pathetic or sublime. In point of argument, metaphysical acuteness and legitimate deduction, the English poet is, in every respect, superior to his classical model Lucretius; but how greatly does he fall beneath the fervid genius and creative fancy of the Latian bard!

Sir John died suddenly on the 7th of December, 1626, in the fifty-seventh year of his age.

10. **DAVORS, JOHN.** Of this poet little more is known, than that he published, in 1613, the following work; "The Secrets of Angling; teaching the choicest Toolles, Baits, and Seasons, for the taking of any Fish, in Pond or River: practised and familiarly opened in three Bookes." 12mo.

Upon a subject so technical and didactic, few opportunities for poetical imagery might naturally be expected; but Davors has most happily availed himself of those which occurred, and has rendered his poem, in many places, highly interesting by beauty of sentiment and warmth of description. A lovely specimen of his powers may be found in the "Complete Angler" of Isaac Walton, and the following invocation, from the opening of the First Book, shall be given as a further proof of the genuineness of his inspiration, and with this additional remark, that his versification is throughout singularly harmonious:—

You Nymphs that in the springs and waters sweet, Your dwelling have, of every hill and dale, And oft amidst the meadows green do meet To sport and play, and hear the nightingale, And in the rivers fresh do wash you feet, While Progne's sister tels her wofull tale: Such ayd and power unto my verses lend, As may suffice this little worke to end.	And thou, sweet Boyd, that with thy wat'ry sway Dost wash the Clifles of Deignton and of Week, And through their rocks with crooked winding way, Thy mother Avon runnest soft to seek; In whose fair streams, the speckled trout doth play, The roch, the dace, the gudgin, and the bleike: Teach me the skill with slender line and book To take each fish of river, pond, and brook."
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A second edition of "The Secrets of Angling," "augmented with many approved experiments," by W. Lawson, was printed in 1652, and a third would be acceptable even in the present day.

11. **DONNE, JOHN, D.D.** The greater part of the poetry of this prelate, though not published, was written, according to Ben Jonson, before he was twenty-five years of age; and as he was born in London in 1573, he must consequently be ranked as a bard of the sixteenth century. His poems consist of elegies, satires, letters, epigrams, divine poems, and miscellaneous pieces, and procured for him, among his contemporaries, through private circulation and with the public when printed, during the greater part of the seventeenth century, an extraordinary share of reputation. A more refined age, however, and a more chastised taste, have very justly consigned his poetical labours to the shelf of the philologer. A total want of harmony in versification, and a total want of simplicity both in thought and expression, are the vital defects of Donne. Wit he has in abundance, and even erudition, but they are miserably misplaced; and even his amatory pieces exhibit little else than cold conceits and metaphysical subtleties. He may be considered as one of the principal establishers of a school of poetry founded on the worst Italian model, commencing towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, continued to the decease of Charles the Second, and including among its most brilliant cultivators the once popular names of Crashaw, Cleveland, Cowley, and Sprat.

Dr. Donne died in March, 1631, and the first edition of his poems was published by his son two years after that event.

12. **DRAYTON, MICHAEL**, of an ancient family in Leicestershire, was born in the village of Harshul, in the parish of Atherston, in Warwickshire, in 1563. This voluminous and once highly-popular poet has gradually sunk into a state of undeserved oblivion, from which he can alone be extricated by a judicious selection from his numerous works. These may be classed under the heads of historical, topographical, epistolary, pastoral, and miscellaneous poetry. The first includes his "Barons Warres," first published in 1596 under the title of "Mortimeriades; the lamentable Civil Warres of Edward the Second, and the Barons;" his "Legends," written before 1598 and printed in an octavo edition of his poems in 1613, and his "Battle of Agincourt." It cannot be denied that in these pieces there are occasional gleams of imagination, many just reflections, and many laboured descriptions, delivered in perspicuous language, and generally in smooth versification; but they do not interest the heart or elevate the fancy; they are tediously

and minutely historical, void of passion, and, for the most part, languid and prosaic. The second department exhibits the work on which he rested his hopes of immortality, the elaborate and highly-finished "*Poly-olbion*," of which the first eighteen songs made their appearance in 1612, accompanied by the very erudite notes of Selden, and the whole was completed in thirty parts in 1622. The chief defect in this singular poem results from its plan; to describe the woods, mountains, vallies, and rivers of a country, with all their associations, traditionary, historical, and antiquarian, forms a task which no genius, however exalted, could mould into an interesting whole, and the attempt to enliven it by continued personification has only proved an expedient which still further taxes the patience of the reader. It possesses, however, many beauties which are poetically great; numerous delineations which are graphically correct, and a fidelity with regard to its materials so unquestioned, as to have merited the reference of Hearne and Wood, and the praise of Gough, who tells us that the *Poly-olbion* has preserved many circumstances which even Camden has omitted. It is a poem, in short, which will always be consulted rather for the information that it conveys, than for the pleasure that it produces.

To "*England's Heroical Epistles*," which constitute the third class, not much praise can now be allotted, notwithstanding they were once the most admired of the author's works. Occasional passages may, it is true, be selected, which merit approbation for novelty of imagery and beauty of expression; but nothing can atone for their wanting what, from the nature of the subjects chosen, should have been their leading characteristic—pathos.

It is chiefly as a pastoral poet that Drayton will live in the memory of his countrymen. The shepherd's reed was an early favourite; for in 1593 he published his "*Idea: the Shepherd's Garland, fashioned in nine Eglogs: and Rowland's Sacrifice to the nine Muses*," which were reprinted under the title of *Pastorals*, and with the addition of a tenth eclogue. His attachment to rural imagery was nearly as durable as his existence; for the year previous to his death he brought forward another collection of pastorals, under the title of "*The Muses Elisium*." Of these publications, the first is in every respect superior, and gives the author a very high rank among rural bards; his descriptions are evidently drawn from nature; they often possess a decided originality, and are couched in language pure and unaffected, and of the most captivating simplicity.

The miscellaneous productions of Drayton include a vast variety of pieces; odes, elegies, sonnets, religious effusions, etc. etc. To specify the individual merit of these would be useless; but among them are two which, from their peculiar value, call for appropriate notice. A most playful and luxuriant imagination is displayed to much advantage in the "*Nymphidia, or The Court of Fairy*," and an equal degree of judgment, together with a large share of interest, in the poem addressed to his loved friend Henry Reynolds, "*On Poets and Poesy*." These, with the first collection of pastorals, part of the second, and some well-chosen extracts from his bulkier works, would form a most fascinating little volume. Drayton died on December 23, 1631, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

DRUMMOND, WILLIAM. The birth of this truly elegant poet is placed at Hawthornden in Scotland, on the 13th of December, 1585, and the publication of the first portion of his *Sonnets*, in 1616, entitles him to due notice among these critical sketches.

A disappointment of the most afflictive nature, for death snatched from him the object of his affection almost immediately after she had consented to be his, has given a peculiar and very pathetic interest to the greater part of his poetical compositions, which are endeared to the reader of sensibility by the charm resulting from a sincere and never-dying regret for the memory of his earliest love.

His poetry, which has never yet been properly arranged, consists principally of poems of a lyrical cast, including sonnets, madrigals, epigrams, epitaphs, miscellanies, and divine poems.

Of these classes, the first and second exhibit numerous instances of a versification decidedly more polished and elegant than that of any of his contemporaries, and to this technical merit is frequently to be added the still more rare and valuable distinctions of beauty of expression, simplicity of thought, delicacy of sentiment, and tenderness of feeling. Where he has failed, his faults are to be attributed to the then prevailing taste for Italian concetti; to the study of Marino, and his French imitators, Bellay and Du Barta. These deviations from correct taste are, however, neither frequent nor flagrant, and are richly atoned for by strains of native genius, and the felicities of unaffected diction.

Drummond was the intimate friend of Drayton, the Earl of Stirling, and Ben Jonson; the latter holding him in such estimation as to undertake a journey to Scotland on foot, solely for the purpose of enjoying his company and conversation. How far this meeting contributed to enhance their mutual regard, is doubtful; no two characters could be more opposed, the roughness and asperity of Jonson ill according with the elegant manners of the Scottish poet, whose manuscript memoranda relative to this interview plainly intimate his disapprobation of the disposition and habits of his celebrated guest; but unfortunately, at the same time, display a breach of confidence, and a fastidiousness of temper, which throw a shade over the integrity of his own friendship, and the rectitude of his own feelings.

This accomplished bard died on the 4th of December, 1649, aged sixty-three, and though his poems were republished by Phillips, the nephew of Milton, in 1656, with a high encomium on his genius, he continued so obscure, that in 1675, when the *Theatrum Poetarum* of the same critic appeared, he is said to be "utterly disregarded and laid aside;" a fate which, strange as it may seem, has, until these few years, almost completely veiled the merit of one of the first poets of the sister kingdom.

14. FAIREFAX, EDWARD. The singular beauty of this gentleman's translation of Tasso, and its influence on English versification, demand a greater share of notice than is due to any poetical version preceding that of Pope. He was the son of Sir Thomas Faifax, of Denton in Yorkshire, and early cultivating the enjoyment of rural and domestic life, retired with the object of his affections to Newhall, in the parish of Fuyistone, in Knaresborough forest, where he usefully occupied his time in the education of his children, and the indulgence of literary pursuits. His "*Godfrey of Bulloigne*," the work which has immortalized his name, was written whilst he was very young, was published in 1600, and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth.

This masterly version, which for the last half century has been most undeservedly neglected, has not hitherto been superseded by any posterior attempt. Though rendered line by line, and in the octava stanza of the Italians, it possesses an uncommon share of elegance, vigour, and spirit, and very frequently exhibits the facility and raciness of original composition. That it contributed essentially towards the improvement of our versification, may be proved from the testimony of Dryden and Waller, the former declaring him superior in harmony even to Spenser, and the latter confessing that he owed the melody of his numbers to a studious imitation of his metrical skill.*

It is greatly to be regretted that the original poetry of Faifax, with the exception of one piece, has been suffered to perish. It consisted of a poetical history of the Black Prince, and twelve Eclogues, of which the fourth is preserved by Mrs. Cooper in her *Muses' Library*. This lady informs us that the eclogues

* Dr. Johnson was of opinion that the translation of Mr. Hoole would entirely supersede the labours of Faifax. With no discriminating judge of poetry, however, will this ever be the case; there is a tameness and mediocrity in the version of Mr. Hoole, which must always place it far beneath the spirited copy of the elder bard. Had Mr. Brookes completed the *Jerusalem* with the same harmony and vigour which he had exhibited in the first three books, a desideratum in English literature had been supplied, and the immortal poem of Tasso had appeared clothed in diction and numbers worthy of the most polished era of our poetry.

were all written after the accession of King James to the throne of England; that they were occupied by "important subjects relating to the manners, characters, and incidents of the times he lived in; that they were pointed with many fine strokes of satire; dignified with wholesome lessons of morality, and policy, to those of the highest rank; and some modest hints even to Majesty itself; and that the learning they contained was "so various and extensive, that, according to the evidence of his son (who has written large Annotations on each), no man's reading, beside his own, was sufficient to explain his references effectually."*

Fairefax died about the year 1632; and, beside his poetical works, was the author of several controversial pieces, and of a learned essay on Demonology.

15. FITZGEFFREY, CHARLES, was a native of Cornwall, of a genteel family, and was entered a commoner of Broadgate's hall, Oxford, in 1592. Having taken his degrees in arts, and assumed the clerical profession, he finally became rector of St. Dominic in his own county. In 1596, he published a poem to the memory of Sir Francis Drake, entitled "Sir Francis Drake his honorable Life's commendation; and his tragicall Deathe's lamentation;" 12mo. This poem, which possesses no small portion of merit, is dedicated, in a sonnet, "to the beauteous and vertuous Lady Elizabeth, late wife unto the highlie renowned Sir Francis Drake, deceased," and is highly spoken of by Browne and Meres; the former declaring that he unfolded

"The tragedie of Drake in leaves of gold;"†

and the latter asserting that "as C. Plinius wrote the life of Pomponius Secundus, so yong Cha. Fitz-Geffray, that high-touring falcon, hath most gloriously penned the honourable life and death of worthy Sir Francis Drake."‡

As the poetry of Fitzgeffrey is very little known, we shall give the Sonnet to Lady Drake as a pleasing specimen of his genius:

"Divorc'd by Death, but wedded still by Love,
For Love by Death can never be divorc'd;
Loe! England's dragon, thy true turtle dove,
To seeke his make is now againe enforc'd.
Like as the sparrow from the kestrel's ire,
Made his asylum in the wise man's fist:
So, he and I, his tongues-man, do require
Thy sanctuary, envie to resist.
So may heroique Drake, whose worth gave wings
Unto my Muse, that nere before could fly,
And taught her tune these harsh discordant strings
A note above her rurall minstrelsy,
Live in himsele, and I in him may live;
Thine eyes to both vitality shall give."§

Beside his volume on Drake, Fitzgeffrey was the author of a collection of Latin epigrams, in three books, under the title of "Affaniæ," printed in 8vo, 1601, and of a religious poem, called "The Blessed Birth-day," 1634, 4to. He lived highly respected both as a poet and divine, and died at his parsonage-house in 1636-7.

16. FLETCHER, GILES, the elder brother of Phineas Fletcher, was born in 1588, took the degree of bachelor of divinity at Oxford, and died at his rectory of Alderton, in Suffolk, in 1623. The production which has given him a poet's fame, was published in 1610, under the title of "Christ's Victory and Triumph in Heaven and Earth over and after Death," Cambridge, 4to. It is written in stanzas of eight lines, and divided into four parts, under the appellations of "Christ's Victory in Heaven, his Triumph on Earth, his Triumph over Death, and his Triumph after Death."

This is a poem which exhibits strong powers of description, and a great com-

* Muses' Library, 1741, p. 363.

† Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 53.

‡ Chalmers's English Poets, vol. vi. p. 295.

§ British Bibliographer, No. VII. p. 118.

mand of language; it is, however, occasionally sullied by conceits, and by a frequent play upon words, of which the initial stanza is a striking proof. Our author was an ardent admirer of Spenser, and has in many instances successfully imitated his picturesque mode of delineation, though he has avoided following him in the use of the prosopopeia.

17. FLETCHER, PHINEAS, who surpassed his brother in poetical genius, took his bachelor's degree at King's College, Cambridge, in 1604, and his master's degree in 1608. Though his poems were not published until 1633, there is convincing proof that they were written before 1610; for Giles, at the close of his "Christ's Victory," printed in this year, thus beautifully alludes not only to his brother's Purple Island, but to his eclogues, as previous compositions:—

" But let the Kentish lad, that lately taught
His *oaten reed* the trumpets silver sound,
Young *Thyrsilis*; and for his music brought
The willing spheres from Heav'n, to lead around
The dancing nymphs and swains, that sung, and crown'd
Eclectas Hymen with ten thousand flowers
Of choicest praise, and hung her heav'nly bow'rs
With saffron garlands, dress'd for nuptial paramours;

Let his shrill trumpet, with her silver blast
Of fair Eclecta, and her spousal bed,
Be the sweet pipe, and smooth encomiast:
But my green Muse, hiding her younger head,
Under old Camus's flaggy banks, that spread
Their willow locks abroad, and all the day
With their own wa'try shadows wanton play:
Dares not those high amours, and love-sick songs assay." *

It is, indeed, highly probable, that they were composed even before he took his bachelor's degree; for, in the dedication of his "Purple Island to his learned friend, Edward Benlowes, Esq., he terms them "raw essays of my very unripe years, and almost childhood." †

The "Purple Island," is an allegorical description, in twelve cantos, of the corporeal and intellectual functions of man. Its interest and effect have been greatly injured by a too minute investigation of anatomical facts; the first five cantos being little else than a lecture in rhyme, and productive more of disgust than any other sensation. In the residue of the poem, the bard bursts forth with unshackled splendour, and the passions and mental powers are personified with great brilliancy of imagination, and great warmth of colouring. Like his brother, however, he is defective in taste; the great charm of composition, simplicity, is too often lost amid the mazes of quaint conception and meretricious ornament. Yet are there passages interspersed through this allegory, of exquisite tenderness and sweetness, alike simple and correct in diction, chaste in creative power, and melodious in versification.

"The "Piscatory Eclogues," to novelty of scenery add many passages of genuine and delightful poetry, and the music of the verse is often highly gratifying to the ear; but many of the same faults are discernible in these pieces, which we remarked in the "Purple Island;" pedantry and forced conceits occasionally intrude, and, though the poet has not injured the effect of his delineations by coarseness, or rusticity of expression, he has sometimes forgotten the simple elegance which should designate the pastoral muse.

Our author was presented to the living of Hilgay, in Norfolk, in 1621, and died there about the year 1650.

18. GASCOIGNE, GEORGE, the son of Sir John Gascoigne, was descended from an ancient family in Essex, and after a private education under the care of Stephen Nevinson, L.L.D., he was sent to Cambridge, and from thence to Gray's

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. vi. p. 79.

† *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 81.

Inn, for the purpose of studying the law. Like many men, however, of warm passions and strong imagination, he neglected his profession for the amusements and dissipation of a court, and having exhausted his paternal property, he found himself under the necessity of seeking abroad, in a military capacity, that support which he had failed to acquire at home. He accordingly accepted a Captain's commission in Holland, in 1572, under William Prince of Orange, and having signalled his courage at the siege of Middleburg, had the misfortune to be captured by the Spaniards near Leyden, and, after four months' imprisonment, revisited his native country.

He now resumed his profession and his apartments at Gray's Inn; but in 1575, on his return from accompanying Queen Elizabeth in her progress to Kenilworth Castle, he fixed his residence at his "poore house," at Walthamstow, where he employed himself in collecting and publishing his poems. He was not long destined, however, to enjoy this literary leisure; for, according to George Whetstone, who was "an eye-witness of his godly and charitable end in this world," he expired at Stamford, in Lincolnshire, on the 7th of October, 1577, when he was probably under forty years of age.*

The poetry of Gascoigne was twice collected during his life-time; firstly, in 1572, in a quarto volume, entitled, "A Hundredth sundrie Flowres bounde up in one small Poesie. Gathered partely (by translation) in the fyne outlandish Gardins of Euripides, Ovid, Petrarke, Ariosto, and others: and partly by invention, out of our owne fruitefull Orchardes in Englande: Yielding sundrie sweet savours of Tragical, Comical, and Morall Discourses, both pleasaunt and profitable to the well smellyng noses of learned Readers. Meritum petere, grave. At London, Imprinted for Richarde Smith;" and secondly in 1575, with the title of "The Posies of George Gascoigne, Esquire. Corrected, perfected, and augmented by the Authour. Tam Marti, quam Mercurio. Imprinted at London by H. Bynneman, for Richard Smith." This edition is divided into three parts, under the appellation of "Flowers, Hearbes, and Weedes," to which are annexed "Certayne notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati."

Besides these collections, Gascoigne published separately, "The Glasse of Government. A Tragical Comedie," 1575. "The Steele Glass. A Satyre," 1576. "The Princely Pleasures, at the Court of Kenelworth," 1576; and "A Delicate Diet for daintie mouthed Drunkards," a prose tract, 1576. After his death appeared, in 1586, his tract, entitled, "The Droome of Doomes day; and in 1587, was given to the world, a complete edition of his works, in small quarto, black letter.

Gascoigne, though patronized by several illustrious characters, among whom may be enumerated, Lord Grey of Wilton, the Earl of Bedford, and Sir Walter Raleigh, appears to have suffered so much from the envy and malignity of his critics, as to induce him to intimate, that the disease of which he died, was occasioned by the irritability of mind resulting from these attacks; and yet, as far as we have an opportunity of judging, his contemporaries seem to have done justice to his talents; at least Gabriel Harvey and Arthur Hall, Nash, Webbe, and Puttenham, have together praised him for his wit, his imagination, and his metre; and in the Glosse to Spenser's Calender, he is styled "the very chief of our late rymers."

The poetry of our author has not, in modern times, met with all the attention which it deserves; specimens, it is true, have been selected by Cooper, Percy, Warton, Headley, Ellis, Brydges, and Haslewood; but, with the exception of the re-impression of 1810, in Mr. Chalmers's English Poets, no edition of his works has been published since 1587. This is the more extraordinary, for, as the in-

* For further particulars of his life see Chalmers's English Poets, vol. ii. p. 447. et seq., Censura Literaria, vol. i. p. 110, and British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. 73.

genious editor has just remarked, "there are three respects in which his claims to originality require to be noticed as eras in a history of poetry. His *Steele Glass* is among the first specimens of blank verse in our language; his *Jocasta* is the second theatrical piece written in that measure; and his *Supposes* is the first comedy written in prose." * Warton has pronounced him to have "much exceeded all the poets of his age in smoothness and harmony of versification, † an encomium which particularly applies to the lyrical portion of his works, which is indeed exquisitely polished, though not altogether free from affectation and antithesis. Among these pieces, too, is to be discovered a considerable range of fancy, much tenderness and glow of sentiment, and a frequent felicity of expression. In moral and didactic poetry, he has likewise afforded us proofs approaching to excellence, and his satire entitled "*The Steele Glass*," includes a curious and minute picture of the manners and customs of the age.

To the "*Supposes*" of Gascoigne, a translation from the *Suppositi* of Ariosto, executed with peculiar neatness and ease, Shakspeare has been indebted for a part of his plot of the "*Taming of the Shrew*."

19. GREENE, ROBERT. Of this ingenious and prolific writer, we have already related so many particulars, that nothing more can be wanting here, than a brief character of his poetical genius. Were his poetry collected from his various pamphlets and plays, of which nearly fifty are known to be extant, a most interesting little volume might be formed. The extreme rarity, however, of his productions, may render this an object of no easy attainment; but of its effect a pretty accurate idea may be acquired from what has been done by Mr. Beloe, who, in his *Anecdotes of Literature*, has collected many beautiful specimens from the following pieces of our author. "*Tullie's Love*, 1616; *Penelope's Web*, 1601: *Farewell to Follie*, 1617; *Never Too Late*, 1590; *History of Arbasto*, 1617; *Arcadia, or Menaphor*, 1589; *Orphanion*, 1599; *Philomela*, 1592."

Though most of the productions of Greene were written to supply the wants of the passing hour, yet the poetical effusions scattered through his works betray few marks of haste or slovenliness, and many of them, indeed, may be classed among the most polished and eminent of their day. To much warmth and fertility of fancy, they add a noble strain of feeling and enthusiasm, together with many exquisite touches of the pathetic, and so many impressive lessons of morality, as, in a great measure, to atone for the licentiousness of several of his prose tracts. ‡

20. HALL, JOSEPH, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, was born on the first of July, 1574, at Brestow Park, Leicestershire. He was admitted of Emanuel College, Cambridge, at the age of fifteen, and when twenty-three years old, published his satires, under the title of *Virgidemiarum*, Sixe Bookes. First Three Bookes of Tooth-less Satyrs: 1. Poetical; 2. Academicall; 3. Moral; printed by T. Creede for R. Dexter, 1597. The Three last Bookes of Byting Satyrs, by R. Bradock for Dexter, 1598. Both parts were reprinted together in 1599, and have conferred upon their author a just claim to the appellation of one of our earliest and best satiric poets. Of the legitimate satire, indeed, he appears to have given us the first example, an honour upon which he justly prides himself, for, in the opening of his prologue, he tells us

" I first adventure, with fool-hardy might,
To tread the steps of perilous desight:
I first adventure, follow me who list,
And be the *second* English satirist."

On the republication of the *Virgidemiarum* at Oxford, in 1752, Gray, in a let-

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. ii. p. 455.

† Observations on the Fairy Queen, vol. ii. p. 168.

‡ The reprint which has just appeared of our author's "*Philomela*," is a proof, however, that his prose was occasionally the medium of sound instruction; for the moral of this piece is unexceptionable. We may also remark, that the confessions wrung from him in the hour of repentance are highly monitory, and calculated to make the most powerful and salutary impression.

ter to Dr. Wharton, speaking of these satires, says, "they are full of spirit and poetry, as much of the first as Dr. Donne, and far more of the latter;" and Warton, at the commencement of an elaborate and extended critique on Hall's poetic genius, in the Fragment of his fourth volume of the History of English Poetry, gives the following very discriminative character of these satires. They "are marked," he observes, "with a classical precision, to which English poetry had yet rarely attained. They are replete with animation of style and sentiment. The animation of the satirist is always the result of good sense. Nor are the thorns of severe invective unmixed with the flowers of pure poetry. The characters are delineated in strong and lively colouring, and their discriminations are touched with the masterly traces of genuine humour. The versification is equally energetic and elegant, and the fabric of the couplets approaches to the modern standard. It is no inconsiderable proof of a genius predominating over the general taste of an age when every preacher was a punster, to have written verses, where laughter was to be raised, and the reader to be entertained with sallies of pleasantry, without quibbles and conceits. His chief fault is obscurity, arising from a remote phraseology, constrained combinations, unfamiliar allusions, elliptical apostrophes, and abruptness of expression. Perhaps some will think that his manner betrays too much of the laborious exactness and pedantic anxiety of the scholar and the student. Ariosto in Italian, and Regnier in French, were now almost the only writers of satire; and I believe there had been an English translation of Ariosto's Satires. But Hall's acknowledged patterns are Juvenal and Persius, not without some touches of the urbanity of Horace. His parodies of these poets, or rather his adaptations of ancient to modern manners, a mode of imitation not unhappily practised by Oldham, Rochester, and Pope, discover great facility and dexterity of invention. The moral gravity and the censorial declamation of Juvenal he frequently enlivens with a train of more refined reflection, or adorns with a novelty and variety of images." *

The Satires of Hall exhibit a very minute and curious picture of the literature and manners, the follies and vices of his times, and numerous quotations in the course of our work will amply prove the wit, the sagacity, and the elegance of his Muse. Poetry was the occupation merely of his youth, the vigour and decline of his days being employed in the composition of professional works, calculated, by their piety, eloquence, and originality, to promote in the most powerful manner the best interests of morality and religion. This great and good man died, after a series of persecution from the republican party, at his little estate at Heigham, near Norwich, on the 8th of September, 1656, and in the eighty-second year of his age.

21. HARINGTON, SIR JOHN. Among the numerous translators of the Elizabethan period, this gentleman merits peculiar notice, as having, through the medium of his Ariosto, "enriched our poetry by a communication of new stores of fiction and imagination, both of the romantic and comic species, of Gothic machinery and familiar manners." † His version of the Orlando Furioso, of which the first edition was published in 1591, procured him a large share of celebrity. Stowe, in his Annals, has classed him among those excellent poets which worthily flourish in their own works, and lived together in Queen Elizabeth's reign; and Fuller, ‡ Philips, Dryden, and others, to the middle of the eighteenth century, have spoken of him in terms of similar commendation. In point of poetical execution, however, his translation, whatever might be its incidental operation on our poetic literature, must now be considered as vulgar, tame, and inaccurate. Sir John was born at Kelston near Bath, in 1561, and died there in 1612, aged fifty-one. His "Epigrams," in four Books, were published after his death; first in 1615, when the

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 226.

† Warton's Hist. of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 485.

‡ This writer terms Sir John "one of the most ingenious poets of our English nation," and says "he was a Poet in all things, save in his wealth, leaving a fair estate to a learned and religious son."—*Worthies*, part iii. p. 28.

fourth book alone was printed; again in 1618, including the whole collection; and a third time in 1625, small 8vo. The poetical merit of these pieces is very trifling, but they throw light upon contemporary character and manners.

22. JONSON, BENJAMIN. Of this celebrated poet, the friend and companion of Shakspeare, a very brief notice, and limited to his minor pieces, will here be necessary, as his dramatic works and some circumstances of his life will hereafter occupy their due share of attention. His poems were divided by himself into "Epigrams," * "The Forest," * "Under-woods," and a translation of "Horace's Art of Poetrie;" to which his late editors have added, "Miscellaneous Pieces." The general cast of these poems is not such as will recommend them to a modern ear; they are but too often cold and affected; but occasionally, instances of a description the very reverse of these epithets are to be found, where simplicity and beauty of expression constitute the prominent features. It is chiefly, if not altogether, among his minor pieces in the lyric measure that we meet with this peculiar neatness and concinnity of diction: thus, in "The Forest," the lines from Catullus, beginning "Come, my Celia, let us prove," and the well-known song

"Drink to me only with thine eyes;"

in the "Underwoods," the stanzas commencing

"For Love's sake kisse me once again;"

"Or scorne, or pittie on me take;"

and, among his "Songs," these with the initial lines

"Queene and huntresse, chaste and faire;"

"Still to be neat, still to be drest;"

are striking proofs of these excellencies.

We must also remark that, among his "Epistles" and "Miscellaneous Pieces," there are discoverable a few very conspicuous examples of the union of correct and nervous sentiment with singular force and dignity of elocution. Of this happy combination, the lines to the Memory of Shakspeare, an eulogium which will claim our attention in a future page, may be quoted as a brilliant model.

23. LODGE, THOMAS, M. D. This gentleman, though possessing celebrity, in his day, as a physician, is chiefly entitled to the attention of posterity as a poet. He was a native of Lincolnshire, and born about 1556; educated at Oxford, of which he became a member about 1573, and died of the plague at London, in September, 1625. He has the double honour of being the first who published, in our language, a Collection of Satires, so named, and of having suggested to Shakspeare the plot of his *As You Like It*. Philips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum*, characterises him as "one of the writers of those pretty old pastoral songs, which were very much the strain of those times;" but as strangely overlooked his satirical powers; these, however, have been noticed by Meres, who remarks, that "as Horace, Lucilius, Juvenal, Persius and Lucullus are the best for Satyre among the Latins, so with us in the same faculty, these are chiefe: Piers Plowman, Lodge, Hall of Emmanuel Colledge in Cambridge, the author of *Pigmalion's Image*, etc. † The work which gives him precedence, as a writer of professed satires, is entitled "A Fig for Momus; containing pleasant Varietie, included in satyrs, Eclogues, and Epistles, by T. L. of Lincolnes Inne, Gent." 1595. ‡ It is dedicated to "William, Earle of Darbie," and though published two years before the

* The popularity of these epigrams, notwithstanding their poetical mediocrity, may be estimated from the opinion of the publisher of the edition of 1625. "If in poetry," he remarks, "heraldry were admitted, he would be found in happiness of wit near allied to the great Sidney: yet but near; for the Apex of the *Cœlum Empyrium* is not more inaccessible, than is the height of Sidney's poesy, which by imagination we may approach, by imitation never attain to."—Vide *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. xxiii.

† Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 114.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 115.

appearance of Hall's Satires, possesses a spirit, ease and harmony, which that more celebrated poet has not surpassed. Than the following lines, selected from the first satire, we know few which, in the same department, can establish a better claim to vigour, truth, and melody :—

" All men are willing with the world to haulte,
But no man takes delight to knowe his faulte—
Tell bleer-eid Linus that his sight is cleere,
Heele pawne himselfe to buy thee bread and beere ;—
Find me a niggard that doth want the shift
To call his cursed avarice good thrift ;
A rakehell sworne to prodigalitie,
That dares not terme it liberalitie ;
A lecher that hath lost both flesh and fame,
That holds not lecherie a pleasant game :—
Thus with the world, the world dissembles still,
And to their own confusions follow will,
Holding it true felicitie to flie,
Not from the sinne, but from the seeing eie." *

The debt of Shakspeare to our author is to be found in a pamphlet entitled " Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacie, found after his Death in his Cell at Silexdra, by T. L. Gent." The poetical pieces interspersed through this tract correspond with the character given of Lodge's composition by Phillips; for they are truly pastoral, and are finished in a style of great sweetness, delicacy, and feeling. Want of taste, or want of intimacy with this production, has induced Mr. Steevens to give a very improper estimate of it; " Shakspeare," he remarks, " has followed Lodge's novel more exactly than is his general custom when he is indebted to such worthless originals; and has sketched some of his principal characters, and borrowed a few expressions from it."

The poetry of Lodge is to be gleaned from his pamphlets; particularly from the two which we have mentioned, and from the two now to be enumerated, namely, " Phillis: honoured with pastorall sonnets, elegies and amorous delights. Whereunto is annexed, the tragicall complaynt of Elstred," 1593, 4to, and " A most pleasant historie of Glaucus and Scilla: with many excellent poems, and delectable sonnets," 1610, 4to. He contributed, likewise, to the Collection termed " The Phoenix Nest," 1593, and " England's Helicon," 1600; and in the Preface, by Sir Egerton Brydges, to the third edition of the latter Miscellany, so just a tribute is paid to his genius as imperatively demands insertion; more particularly if we consider the obscurity into which this poet has fallen. " In ancient writings," observes the critic, " we frequently meet with beautiful passages; but whole compositions are seldom free from the most striking inequalities; from inharmonious verses; from lame, or laboured and quaint expressions; and creeping or obscure thoughts. In Lodge we find whole pastorals and odes, which have all the ease, polish, and elegance of a modern author. How natural is the sentiment, and how sweet the expression of the following in ' Old Damon's Pastoral: '

" Homely hearts do harbour quiet;
Little fear, and mickle solace;
States suspect their bed and diet;
Fear and craft do haunt the palace.
Little would I, little want I,
Where the mind and store agreeth;
Smallest comfort is not scanty;
Least he longs that little seeth.

Time hath been that I have longed,
Foolish I to like of folly,
To converse where honour thronged,
To my pleasures linked wholly:
Now I see, and seeing sorrow
That the day consum'd returns not:
Who dare trust upon to-morrow,
When nor time nor life sojourns not!"

" How charmingly he breaks out in ' The Solitary Shepherd's Song: ' —

" O shady vale, O fair enriched meads,
O sacred flowers, sweet fields, and rising mountains;
O painted flowers, green herbs where Flora treads,
Refresh'd by wanton winds and watry fountains!"

* Vide Beloe on Scarce Books, vol. ii. p. 115—117.

“ Is there one word or even accent obsolete in this picturesque and truly poetical stanza?

“ But if such a tender and moral fancy be ever allowed to trifle, is there any thing of the same kind in the whole compass of English poetry more exquisite, more delicately imagined, or expressed with more finished and happy artifice of language, than Rosalind’s Madrigal, beginning —

“ Love in my bosom, like a bee,
Doth suck his sweet :
Now with his wings he plays with me,
Now with his feet.
Within mine eyes he makes his rest ;
His bed amidst my tender breast ;
My kisses are his daily feast ;
And yet he robs me of my rest.
Ah, wanton, will ye ? ”—

“ Compare Dr. Lodge not only with his contemporaries but his successors, and who, except Breton, has so happily anticipated the taste, simplicity, and purity of the most refined age.” *

Beside his miscellaneous poetry, Lodge published two dramatic pieces,† and may be considered as a voluminous prose writer. Seven of his prose tracts are described by Mr. Beloe,‡ and he translated the works of Josephus and Luc. An. Seneca.

24. MARLOW, CHRISTOPHER. As the fame of this poet, though once in high repute as a dramatic writer, is now supported merely by one of his miscellaneous pieces, which is, indeed, of exquisite beauty, it has been thought necessary briefly to introduce him here, a more extended notice being deferred to a subsequent page. His earliest attempt appeared in 1587, when he was about twenty-five years of age, in a Translation of Coluthus’s Rape of Helen into English rhyme. This was followed by “ Certaine of Ovid’s Elegies,” licensed in 1593, but not printed until 1596. His next and happiest version was given to the public in 1598, under the title of “ The Loves of Hero and Leander,” being, like the preceding, a posthumous publication : for the author died prematurely in 1593, leaving this translation, of which the original is commonly but erroneously ascribed to Musæus, unfinished. Phillips, in his character of Marlow, comparing him with Shakspeare, says, that he resembled him not only in his dramatic circumstances, “ but also because in his begun poem of Hero and Leander, he seems to have a resemblance of that clean and unsophisticated wit, which is natural to that incomparable poet.” Marlow translated also “ Lucans first booke, line for line,” in blank verse, which was licensed in 1593, and printed in 1600 ; but the production which has given him a claim to immortality, and which has retained its popularity even to the present day, first made its appearance in “ England’s Helicon,” under the appellation of The Passionate Shepheard to his Love.” Of an age distinguished for the excellence of its rural poetry, this is, without doubt, the most admirable and finished pastoral.

25. MARSTON, JOHN, who has a claim to introduction here, from his powers as a satirical poet. In 1598, he published “ The Metamorphosis, or Pigmalion’s Image. And certaine Satyres.” Of these the former is an elegant and luxurious description of a well-known fable, and to this sportive effusion Shakspeare seems to allude in his Measure for Measure, where Lucio exclaims, “ What, is there none of Pygmalion’s images, newly made woman, to be had now ? ” (Act. iii. sc. 2.) His fame as a satirist was established the year following, by the appearance of his “ Scourge of Villanie. Three Bookes of Satyres.”

A reprint of these pieces was given to the world by Mr. Bowles, in the

* British Bibliographer, No. 11. Preface to England’s Helicon, p. 6, 7.

† Biographia Dramatica, vol. i. p. 287. edit. 1782.

‡ Vol. ii. p. 159. et seq.

year 1764, who terms the author the "British Persius," and adds, that very little is recorded of him with certainty. "Antony a Wood," he remarks, "who is generally exact in his accounts of men, and much to be relied upon, is remarkably deficient with respect to him; indeed there seems to be little reason to think he was of Oxford: it is certain from his works, that he was of Cambridge, where he was contemporary with Mr. Hall, with whom, as it appears from his satire, called *Reactio*, and from the *Scourge of Villanie*, sat. 10, he had some dispute. —It has not been generally known who was the author of *Pigmalion* and the five satyres: but that they belong to Marston is clear from the sixth and tenth satyres of the *Scourge of Villanie*: and to this may be added the evidence of the collector of England's Parnassus, printed 1600, who cites the five first lines of the Dedication to opinion, prefixed to *Pigmalion* by the name of J. Marston, p. 221."

"These satyres," says Mr. Warton, "in his observations on Spenser, contain many well drawn characters, and several good strokes of a satirical genius, but are not, upon the whole, so finished and classical as Bishop Hall's: the truth is, they were satirists of a different cast: Hall turned his pen against his contemporary writers, and particularly versifiers; Marston chiefly inveighed against the growing foibles and vices of the age."

There is undoubtedly a want of polish in the satirical muse of Marston, which seems, notwithstanding, the result rather of design than inability; for the versification of "*Pigmalion's Image*," is in many of its parts highly melodious. Strength, verging upon coarseness, is, however, the characteristic of the "*Scourge of Villanie*," and may warrant the assertion of the author of "*The Returne from Parnassus*," that he was "a ruffian in his stile."* Yet he is highly complimented by Fitz-Geoffry, no mean judge of poetical merit, who declares that he is

"satyrarum proxima primæ,
Primaque, fas primas si numerare duas."†

26. **NICCOLS, RICHARD.** This elegant poet was born in 1584, was entered of Magdalen College, Oxford, 1602, and took his bachelor's degree in 1606. In 1607, he published "*The Cuckow, a Poem*," in the couplet measure, which displays very vivid powers of description. His next work was a new and enlarged edition of "*The Mirror for Magistrates*," dated 1610, and to which, as a third and last part, he has added, with a distinct title, "*A Winter Night's Vision. Being an Addition of such Princes, especially famous, who were exempted in the former Historie. By Richard Niccols, Oxon. Magd. Hall, etc.*" This supplement consists of an Epistle to the Reader, a Sonnet to Lord Charles Howard, an Induction, and the Lives of King Arthur; Edmund Ironside; Prince Alfred; Godwin, Earl of Kent; Robert Curthose; King Richard the First; King John; King Edward the Second; the two young Princes murdered in the Tower, and King Richard the Third; a selection, to which, with little accordancy, he has subjoined, in the octave stanza, a poem entitled "*England's Eliza: or the victorious and triumphant reign of that virgin empress of sacred memorie, Elizabeth Queene of Englande, etc.*" This is preceded by a Sonnet to Lady Elizabeth Clere, and Epistle to the Reader, and an Induction.

Niccols' addition to this popular series of Legends merits considerable praise, exhibiting many touches of the pathetic, and several highly-wrought proofs of a strong and picturesque imagination. In the Legend of Richard the Third, he appears to have studied with great effect the Drama of Shakspeare.

In 1615, our author published "*Monodia: or, Waltham's Complaint upon the Death of the most virtuous and noble Lady, late deceased, the Lady Honor Hay*;" and in the subsequent year, an elaborate poem, under the title of "*London's Artillery, briefly containing the noble practise of that worthie Societie; with the*

* Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 49.

† Affanæ, lib. ii. Ad Johannem Marstonium.

moderne and ancient martiall exercises, natures of armes, vertue of Magistrates, Antiquitie, Glorie and Chronographie of this honourable Cittie." 4to. This work, dedicated to "the Right Honourable Sir John Jolles, Knight, Lord Maior," etc. is introduced by two Sonnets, a Preface to the Reader, and a metrical Induction; it consists of ten cantos, in couplets, with copious illustrative notes; but, in point of poetical execution, is greatly inferior to his Cuckow, and Winter Night's Vision. Niccols, after residing several years at Oxford, left that University for the capital, where, records Wood, he "obtained an employment suitable to his faculty."

27. **RALEIGH, SIR WALTER.** Of this great, this high-minded, but unfortunate man, it will not be expected that, in his military, naval, or political character, any detail should here be given; it is only with Sir Walter, as a poet, that we are at present engaged, and therefore, after stating that he was born in 1552, at Hayes Farm, in the parish of Budley in Devonshire, and that, to the eternal disgrace of James the First, he perished on a scaffold in 1618, we proceed to record the singular circumstance, that, until the year 1813, no lover of our literature has thought it necessary to collect his poetry. The task, however, has at length been performed, in a most elegant and pleasing manner, by Sir Egerton Brydges,* and we have only to regret that the pieces which he has been able to throw together, should prove so few. Yet we may be allowed to express some surprise, that two poems quoted as Sir Walter's in Sir Egerton's edition of Phillips's "*Theatrum Poetarum*," should not have found a place in this collection. Of these, the first is attributed to Raleigh, on the authority of MSS. in the British Museum, and is entitled, "Sir Walter Raleigh in the Unquiet Rest of his last Sickness," a production equally admirable for its sublimity and Christian morality, and for the strength and concinnity of its expression; the second, of which the closing couplet is quoted by Puttenham as our author's, is given entire by Oldys from a transcript by Lady Isabella Thynne, where it is designated as "The Excuse written by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger years," and though vitiated by conceit, appears to be well authenticated. These, together with two fragments preserved by Puttenham,† would have proved welcome additions to the volume, and, with the exception of his "Cynthia," a poem in praise of the Queen, and now lost, might probably have included all that has been attributed to the muse of Raleigh.

The poetry of our bard seems to have been highly valued in his own days; Puttenham says, that "for dittie and amorous ode, I finde Sir Walter Rawleygh's vayne most loftie, insolent, and passionate;" and Bolton affirms, that "the English poems of Sir Walter Raleigh are not easily to be mended;" ‡ opinions which, even in the nineteenth century, a perusal of his poems will tend to confirm. Of vigour of diction, and moral energy of thought, the pieces entitled, "A Description of the Country's Recreations;" a "Vision upon the Fairy Queen;" the "Farewell," and the Lines written in "his last Sickness," may be quoted as exemplars: and for amatory sweetness, and pastoral simplicity, few efforts will be found to surpass the poems distinguished as "Phillida's Love-call;" "The Shepherd's Description of Love;" the "Answer to Marlow," and "The Silent Lover."

The general estimate of Raleigh as a poet, has been sketched by Sir E. Brydges with his usual felicity of illustration, and as the impression with which he has favoured the public is very limited, and must necessarily soon become extremely scarce, a transcript from this portion of his introductory matter will have its due value with the reader.

"Do I pronounce Raleigh a poet? Not, perhaps, in the judgment of a severe criticism. Raleigh, in his better days, was too much occupied in action to have cultivated all the powers of a poet, which require solitude and perpetual meditation, and a refinement of sensibility, such as intercourse with business and the world deadens!

* "*The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*: now first collected. With a Biographical and Critical Introduction." Dedicated to William Bolland, Esq.

† *Arte of English Poesie*, reprint, p. 165, 167.

‡ Phillips's *Theatrum* apud Brydges, p. 269.

“ But, perhaps, it will be pleaded, that his long years of imprisonment gave him leisure for meditation, more than enough ! It has been beautifully said by Lovelace, that

“ Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage,”

so long as the mind is free. But broken spirits, and indescribable injuries and misfortunes do not agree with the fervour required by the Muse. Hope, that ‘sings of promised pleasure,’ could never visit him in his dreary bondage : and Ambition, whose lights had hitherto led him through difficulties and dangers and sufferings, must now have kept entirely aloof from one, whose fetters disabled him to follow as a votary in her train. Images of rural beauty, quiet, and freedom might, perhaps, have added, by the contrast, to the poignancy of his present painful situation ; and he might rather prefer the severity of mental labour in unravelling the dreary and comfortless records of perplexing History in remote ages of war and bloodshed, than to quicken his sensibilities by lingering amid the murmurs of Elysian waterfalls !

“ There are times when we dare not stir our feelings or our fancies ; when the only mode of reconciling ourselves to the excruciating pressure of our sorrows is the encouragement of a dull apathy, which will allow none but the coarser powers of the intellect to operate.

“ The production of an Heroic Poem would have nobly employed this illustrious Hero’s mighty faculties, during the lamentable years of his unjust incarceration. But could he delight to dwell on the tale of Heroes, to whom the result of Heroism had been oppression, imprisonment, ruin, and condemnation to death ?

“ We have no proof that Raleigh possessed the copious, vivid, and creative powers of Spenser ; nor is it probable that any cultivation would have brought forth from him fruit equally rich. But even in the careless fragments now presented to the reader, I think we can perceive some traits of attraction and excellence which, perhaps, even Spenser wanted. If less diversified than that gifted bard, he would, I think, have sometimes been more forcible and sublime. His images would have been more gigantic, and his reflections more daring. With all his mental attention keenly bent on the busy state of existing things in political society, the range of his thoughts had been lowered down to practical wisdom ; but other habits of intellectual exercise, excursions into the ethereal fields of fiction, and converse with the spirits which inhabit those upper regions, would have given a grasp and a colour to his conceptions as magnificent as the fortitude of his soul !” *

28 SACKVILLE, THOMAS, Lord Buckhurst, was born at Withyam, in Sussex, in 1527. † Though a statesman of some celebrity in the reign of Elizabeth, his fame with posterity rests entirely on his merits as a poet, and these are of the highest order. He possesses the singular felicity of being the first writer of a genuine English tragedy, and the primary inventor of “The Mirrour for Magistrates ;” two obligations conferred upon poetry of incalculable extent.

Of Gorboduc, which was acted in 1561, and surreptitiously printed in 1563, we shall elsewhere have occasion to speak, confining our notice, in this place, to his celebrated “Induction and Legend of Henry Duke of Buckingham,” which were first published in the “Second Part and Second Edition of Baldwin’s Mirrour for Magistrates,” printed in 1563. To this collection we are, indeed, most highly indebted, if the observation of Lord Orford be correct :—“Our historic plays,” he remarks, “are allowed to have been founded on the heroic narratives in the Mirrour for Magistrates ; to that plan, and to the boldness of lord Buckhurst’s new scenes, perhaps we owe SHAKSPEARE !”

Our gratitude to this nobleman will be still further enhanced, when we recollect, that he was more assuredly a model for Spenser, the allegorical pictures in his Induction being, in the opinion of Warton, “so beautifully drawn, that, in all probability, they contributed to direct, at least to stimulate, Spenser’s imagination.” In fact, whoever reads this noble poem of Lord Buckhurst with attention must feel convinced, that it awoke into being the allegorical groups of Spenser ;

* Biographical and Critical Introduction, p. 43—46.

† The date of this nobleman’s birth has been variously given : thus Ritson affirms in his Bibliographia, p. 324, he was born in 1536 ; and Sir Egerton Brydges in his edition of the “Theatrum Poetarum,” also expressly tells us, that “Sackville was not born till 1536,” p. 66 ; but in “The British Bibliographer” he has corrected this assertion, and places his nativity in 1527, which is the true era, as he died aged 81, in 1608.

and that, in force of imagination, in pathos, and in awful and picturesque delineation, it is not inferior to any canto of the *Fairie Queen*. Indeed, from the nature of its plan, the scene being laid in hell, and Sorrow the conductor of the hapless complainants, it often assumes a deeper tone and exhibits a more sombre hue than the muse of Spenser, and more in consonance with the severer intonations of the harp of Dante. How greatly is it to be lamented that the effusions of this divine bard are limited to the pieces which we have enumerated, and that so early in life he deserted the fountains of inspiration, to embark on a troubled sea of politics. Lord Buckhurst died, full of honours, at the Council-Table at Whitehall, on April 19th, 1608, aged eighty-one.

Sir Egerton Bridges, speaking of his magnificent seat at Knowle in West Kent, tells us, that, "though restored with all the freshness of modern art, it retains the character and form of its Elizabethan splendour. The visitor may behold the same walls, and walk in the same apartments which witnessed the inspiration of him, who composed 'The Induction and the Legend of the Duke of Buckingham!' He may sit under the same oaks, and behold, arrayed in all the beauty of art, the same delightful scenery, which cherished the day-dreams of the glowing poet! Perchance he may behold the same shadowy beings glancing through the shades, and exhibiting themselves in all their picturesque attitudes to his entranced fancy!"

29. SOUTHWELL, ROBERT. This amiable but unfortunate Roman Catholic Priest was born at St. Faith's in Norfolk, 1560; he was educated at the University of Douay, became a member of the Society of Jesus at Rome, when but sixteen, and finally prefect in the English college there. Being sent as a missionary to England, in 1584, he was betrayed and apprehended in 1592, and after being imprisoned three years, and racked ten times, he was executed, as an agent for Popery, at Tyburn, on the 21st of February, 1595.

Whatever may have been his religious intemperance or enthusiasm, his works, as a poet and a moralist, place him in a most favourable light; and we are unwilling to credit, that he who was thus elevated, just, and persuasive in his writings, could be materially incorrect in his conduct. In 1595, appeared his "Saint Peter's Complaint, with other poems:" 4to, which went through a second impression in the same year, and was followed by "Mœoniæ, or certaine excellent poems and spiritual Hymns; omitted in the last impression of Peter's complaint; being needfull thereunto to be annexed, as being both divine and wittie," 1595-1596, 4to. These two articles contain his poetical works; his other publications, under the titles of "Marie Magdalen's Funerall Tears;" "The Triumphs over Death; or a consolatorie Epistle, for afflicted minds, in the effects of dying friends," and "Short Rules of Good Life," being tracts in prose, though interspersed with occasional pieces of poetry.

The productions of Southwell, notwithstanding the unpopularity of his religious creed, were formerly in great request; "it is remarkable," observes Mr. Ellis, "that the very few copies of his works which are now known to exist, are the remnant of at least seventeen different editions, of which eleven were printed between 1593 and 1600."* The most ample edition of his labours was printed in 1620 in 16mo, and exhibits five distinct title-pages to the several pieces which we have just enumerated.

Bolton in his "Hypercritica," written about 1616, does credit to his taste, by remarking that "never must be forgotten St. Peter's Complaint, and those other serious poems, said to be father Southwell's: the English whereof, as it is most proper, so the sharpness and light of wit is very rare in them." From this period, however, oblivion seems to have hidden the genius of Southwell from observation, until Warton, by reproducing the criticism of Bolton, in the third volume of his *History of English Poetry*, 1781, recalled attention to the neglected

* Specimens of the Early English Poets, 1st edit. vol. ii. p. 166.

bard. Two years afterwards, Mr. Waldron, in his notes to Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*, gave us three specimens of Southwell's poetry; Mr. Headley reprinted these in 1787; Mr. Ellis extracted an additional piece from the "*Mœonia*" in 1801; in 1802 Ritson presented us with a list of his writings accompanied by the notes of Mr. Park;* and lastly, in 1808, Mr. Haslewood favoured us with an essay on his life and works.†

Both the poetry and the prose of Southwell possess the most decided merit; the former, which is almost entirely restricted to moral and religious subjects, flows in a vein of great harmony, perspicuity, and elegance, and breathes a fascination resulting from the subject and the pathetic mode of treating it, which fixes and deeply interests the reader.

Mr. Haslewood, on concluding his essay on Southwell, remarks, that "those who 'least love the religion,' still must admire and praise the author, and regret that neither his simple strains in prose, nor his 'polished metre,' have yet obtained a collected edition of his works for general readers." The promise of such an edition escaped from the pen of Mr. Headley; at least it was his intention to republish "the better part of Southwell's poetry;" but death, most unhappily, precluded the attempt.

30. SPENSER, EDMUND. This great poet, who was born in London in 1553, has acquired an ever-during reputation in pastoral and epic poetry, especially in the last. His "*Shepherd's Calender: containing twelve aeglogues, proportionable to the twelve monethes,*" was published in 1579; it is a work which has conferred upon him the title of the Father of the English pastoral, and has almost indissolubly associated his name with those of Theocritus and Virgil. Yet two great defects have contributed deeply to injure the popularity of his *Calender*; the adoption of a language much too old and obsolete for the age in which it was written, and the too copious introduction of satire on ecclesiastical affairs. The consequence of this latter defect, this incongruous mixture of church polemics, has been, that the aeglogues for May, July, and September, are any thing but pastorals. Simplicity of diction is of the very essence of perfection in pastoral poetry; but vulgar, rugged, and obscure terms can only be productive of disgust; a result which was felt and complained of by the contemporaries of the poet, and which not all the ingenuity of his old commentator, E. K., can successfully palliate or defend. The pieces which have been least injured by this "ragged and rustical rudeness," as the scholiast aptly terms it, are the pastorals for January, June, October and December, which are indeed very beautiful, and the genuine offspring of the rural reed.

It is, however, to the "*Fairie Queene*" that we must refer for a just delineation of this illustrious bard. It appears to have been commenced about the year 1579; the first three books were printed in 1590, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth in 1596. Whether the remaining six books, which were to have completed the design, were finished or not, continues yet unascertained; Browne, the author of *Britannia's Pastorals*, and Sir Aston Cokain, consider the poem to have been left nearly in its present unfinished state; while Sir James Ware asserts that the latter books were lost by the carelessness of the poet's servant whom he had sent before him into England on the breaking out of the rebellion, and, what seems still more to the purpose, Sir John Stradling, a contemporary of Spenser, and a highly respectable character, positively declares that some of his manuscripts were burnt when his house in Ireland was fired by the rebels. Now, as two cantos of a lost book, entitled "*The Legend of Constancy*," were actually published in 1609 as a part of Spenser's manuscripts which had escaped the conflagration of his castle, it is highly probable that the declaration of Sir John Stradling is correct, and that the poet, if he did not absolutely finish the *Fairie Queene*, had

* *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 340, 341.

† *Censura Literaria*, vol. vi. p. 285—293.

made considerable progress in the work, and that his labours perished with his mansion.

The defects which have vitiated the “*Shepherd’s Calender*,” are not apparent in the “*Fairie Queene*;” the charge of obsolete diction, which has been so generally urged against the latter poem, must have arisen from the just censure which, in this respect, was bestowed upon the former, and the transference may be considered as a striking proof of critical negligence, and of the long-continued influence of opinion, however erroneous. The language of the *Fairie Queene* is, in fact, the language of the era in which it was written, and even in the present day, with few and trifling exceptions, as intelligible as are the texts of Shakspeare and Milton.*

Had Spenser, in this admirable poem, preserved greater unity in the construction of his fable; had he, following the example of Ariost, employed human instead of allegorical heroes, he would undoubtedly have been at once the noblest and most interesting of poets. But, as it is, the warmest admirer of his numerous excellencies must confess, that the personifications which conduct the business of the poem, and are consequently exposed to the broad day-light of observation, are too unsubstantial in their form and texture, too divested of all human organisation, to become the subjects of attachment or anxiety. They flit before us, indeed, as mere abstract and metaphysical essences, as beings neither of this nor any other order of planetary existence. A witch, a fairy, or a magician, is a creation sufficiently blended with humanity, to be capable of exciting very powerful emotion; but the meteor-shades of Holiness or Chastity, personally conducting a long series of adventures, is a contrivance so very remote from all earthly, or even what we conceive of supernatural, agency, as to baffle and revolt the credulities of the reader, however ductile or acquiescent.

Yet, notwithstanding these great and obvious errors in the very foundation of the structure, the merits of Spenser in every other respect are of so decided and exalted a nature, as to place him, in spite of every deduction, in the same class with Homer, Dante, Shakspeare, and Milton. His versification is, in general, uncommonly sweet and melodious; his powers of description such, with respect to beauty, fidelity, and minute finishing, as have not since been equalled; while in strength, brilliancy, and fertility of imagination, it will be no hyperbole to assert, that he takes precedence of almost every poet ancient or modern.

One peculiar and endearing characteristic of the *Fairie Queene*, is the exquisite tenderness which pervades the whole poem. It is impossible indeed to read it without being in love with the author, without being persuaded that the utmost sweetness of disposition, and the purest sincerity and goodness of heart distinguished him who thus delighted to unfold the kindest feelings of our nature, and whose language, by its singular simplicity and energy, seems to breathe the very stamp and force of truth. How grateful is it to record, that the personal conduct of the bard corresponded with the impression resulting from his works; that gentleness, humility, and piety were the leading features of his life, as they still are the most delightful characteristics of his poetry.†

Yet amiable and engaging as is the general cast of Spenser’s genius, he has

* “To the charge of ‘critical negligence,’ in this respect, I am sorry to say, that I must plead guilty in my ‘*Literary Hours* ;’ where, in delineating the character of Spenser, I have brought forward this accusation of *obsolete diction*, without the proper discrimination. Vide *Literary Hours*, 3d edit. vol. ii. p. 161. —In every other respect I consider the criticism as correct. I had then read Spenser but twice through; a further familiarity with the *Fairie Queene* has induced me to withdraw the censure, and to accede to the opinion of Mr. Malone, who conceives the language of the *Fairie Queene* to have been ‘perfectly intelligible to every reader of poetry in the time of Queen Elizabeth, though the *Shepherd’s Calender* was not even then understood without a commentary.”—See his *Dryden’s Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 94.

† It is impossible to view the portrait prefixed to Mr. Todd’s valuable edition of Spenser, without being incredulous as to its authenticity. There is a pertness and satirical sharpness in its expression very inconsistent, not only with the disposition of the poet, but with the features given to him in every other representation, of which the leading character is an air of pensive sweetness.

nevertheless exhibited the most marked excellence as a delineator of those passions and emotions which approach to, or constitute, the sublime. Nowhere do we find the agitations of fear, astonishment, terror, and despair, drawn with such bold and masterly relief; they start in living energy from his pen, and bear awful witness to the grandeur and elevation of his powers.

It is almost superfluous to add, after what has been already observed, that the morality of the *Fairie Queene* is throughout pure and impressive. It is a poem which, more than any other, inculcates those mild and passive virtues, that patience, resignation, and forbearance, which owe their influence to Christian principles. While vice and intemperance are developed in all their hideous deformity, those self-denying efforts, those benevolent and social sympathies, which soften and endear existence, are painted in the most bewitching colours: it is, in short, a work from the study of which no human being can rise without feeling fresh incitement to cherish and extend the charities of life.

Spenser died comparatively, though not actually, indigent, on the 16th of January, 1598.

31. **STIRLING, WILLIAM ALEXANDER, EARL OF.** This accomplished nobleman was born at Menstrie, in the county of Clackmannan, Scotland, 1580, a descendant of the family of Macdonald. He was a favourite both of James the First, and of his son Charles, and by the latter was created Viscount Canada, and subsequently Earl of Stirling. From an early period he gave promise of more than common genius, and his attachment to poetry was fostered, as in Drummond, by the sorrows of unrequited love. To the stimulus of this powerful passion we are indebted for his "*Aurora*, containing the first Fancies of the Author's Youth," 4to, which was published, together with some other pieces, in 1604. This elegant production, the solace of a rural retreat, on his return from a tour on the Continent, consists of one hundred and six sonnets, ten songs or odes, some madrigals, elegies, etc., and places the talents of the writer in a very favourable point of view: for the versification is often peculiarly harmonious, and many beauties, both in imagery and sentiment, are interspersed through the collection, which, though a juvenile production, must be pronounced the most poetical of his works. The diction approximates, indeed, so nearly to that of the present century, that a specimen may be considered as a curiosity, and will confirm the assertion of Lord Orford, that he "was greatly superior to the style of his age."* With the exception of a little quaintness in the second line, the subsequent sonnet will equal the expectation of the reader:—

SONNET X.

"I sweare, Aurora, by thy starrie eyes, And by those golden lockes whose locke none slips, And by the corall of thy rosie lippes, And by the naked snowes which beutie dies; I sweare by all the jewels of thy mind, Whose like yet never worldly treasure bought, Thy solide judgement and thy generous thought,	Which in this darkened age have clearly shin'd: I sweare by those, and by my spotless love, And by my secret, yet most fervent fires, That I have never nurs'd but chaste desires, And such as modestie might well approve. Then since I love those vertuous parts in thee, Shouldst thou not love this vertuous mind in me?"†
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The remaining poems of Stirling consist of four tragedies in alternate rhyme, termed by their author "monarchicke;" namely, *Darius*, published in 1603; *Cræsus*, in 1604; and the *Alexandrian Tragedy*, and *Julius Cæsar*, in 1607. These pieces are not calculated for the stage; but include some admirable lessons for sovereign power, and several choruses written with no small share of poetic vigour. With the *Aurora* in 1604, appeared his poem entitled, "*A Parænesis to the Prince*," a production of great value both in a moral and literary light, and which must have been highly acceptable to a character so truly noble as was that of Henry, to whose memory he paid a pleasing tribute, by printing an "*Elegie on his Death*," in 1612.

* Royal and Noble Authors, vol. v. p. 73.

† Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 298.

The most elaborate of this nobleman's works was given to the public at Edinburgh, in 1614, in 4to, and entitled, "Domes-day; or the great Day of the Lord's Judgment." It is divided into twelve HOURS or Cantos, and has an encomium prefixed by Drummond. Piety and sound morality, expressed often in energetic diction, form the chief merit of this long poem, for it has little pretension to either sublimity or pathos. It had excited, however, the attention of Addison; for when the first two books of Domes-day were reprinted by A. Johnstoun in 1720, their editor tells us, "that Addison had read the author's whole works with the greatest satisfaction; and had remarked, that 'the beauties of our ancient English poets were too slightly passed over by modern writers, who, out of a peculiar singularity, had rather take pains to find fault than endeavour to excel.'"

Lord Stirling republished the whole of his poetical works, with the exception of the "Aurora," in 1637, in a folio volume, including a new but unfinished poem, under the title of "Jonathan." This impression had undergone a most assiduous revision, and was the last labour of its author, who died on the 12th of February, 1640, in his sixtieth year.

32. SYDNEY, SIR PHILIP, one of the most heroic and accomplished characters in the annals of England, was born at Penshurst, in West Kent, on Nov. 29th, 1554, and died at the premature age of thirty-one, on the 17th of October, 1586, having been mortally wounded on the 26th of the preceding September, in a desperate engagement near Zutphen. "As he was returning from the field of battle," records his friend, Lord Brooke, "pale, languid, and thirsty with excess of bleeding, he asked for water to quench his thirst. The water was brought; and had no sooner approached his lips, than he instantly resigned it to a dying soldier, whose ghastly countenance attracted his notice—speaking these ever-memorable words; This man's necessity is still greater than mine."

Had Sir Philip paid an exclusive attention to the poetical art, there is every reason to suppose that he would have occupied a master's place in this department; as it is, his poetry, though too often vitiated by an intermixture of antithesis and false wit, and by an attempt to introduce the classic metres, is still rich with frequent proofs of vigour, elegance, and harmony. His "Arcadia," originally published in 1590, abounds in poetry, among which are some pieces of distinguished merit. In 1591, was printed his "Astrophel and Stella," a collection of one hundred and eight sonnets, and eleven songs, and of these several may be pronounced beautiful. They were annexed to the subsequent editions of the Arcadia, together with "Sonets," containing miscellaneous pieces of lyric poetry, several of which had appeared in Constable's "Diana," 1594. To these may be added, as completing his poetical works, fifteen contributions to "England's Helicon," a few sonnets in "England's Parnassus," three songs in "The Lady of May, a masque," subjoined to the Arcadia, two pastorals in Davison's poems, 1611, and an English version of the Psalms of David.

That Sydney possessed an exquisite taste for, and a critical knowledge of poetry, is sufficiently evident from his eloquent "Defence of Poesy," first published in 1595. This, with his Collected Poetry, would form a very acceptable reprint, especially if recommended by an introduction from the elegant and glowing pen of Sir Egerton Brydges, whose favourite Sydney avowedly is, and to whom he has already paid some very interesting tributes.*

The moral character of this great man equalled his intellectual energy; and the last years of his short life were employed in translating Du Plessi's excellent treatise on the Truth of Christianity.

33. SYLVESTER, JOSHUA, a poet who has lately attracted a considerable degree of attention, from the discovery of his having furnished to Milton the Prima Stamina of his Paradise Lost. He was educated by his uncle, William Plumb, Esq.,

* Vide Poems, 1807, 12mo, 4th edit.; and British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. 81—105 and 289—295. Censura Literaria, vol. ii. p. 175. et seq.; and vol. iii. p. 389.

and died at Middleburgh, in Zealand, on the 28th of September, 1618, aged fifty-five. His principal work, a translation of the "Divine Weeks and Works" of Du Bartas, was commenced in 1590, prosecuted in 1592, 1598, 1599, and completed in 1605, since which period it has undergone six editions; three in quarto, and three in folio, the last being dated 1641.

Both the version of Sylvester, and his original poems, published with it, are remarkable for their inequality, for great beauties, and for glaring defects. His versification is sometimes exquisitely melodious, and was recognised as such by his contemporaries, who distinguished him by the appellation of "silver-tongued Sylvester."* His diction also is occasionally highly nervous and energetic, and sometimes simply elegant; but much more frequently is it disfigured by tumour and bombast. Of the golden lines which his Du Bartas contains, it may be necessary to furnish the reader some proof, and the following, we imagine, cannot fail to excite his surprise:

"O thrice, thrice happy he, who shuns the cares
Of city-troubles, and of state affairs;
And serving Ceres, tills with his own team
His own free land, left by his friends to him!—
And leading all his life at home in peace,
Always in sight of his own smoke; no seas,
No other seas he knows, nor other torrent,
Than that which waters with his silver current
His native meadows: and that very earth
Shall give him burial, which first gave him birth.

To summon timely sleep, he doth not need
Æthiop's cold rush, nor drowsy poppy seed,

The stream's mild murmur, as it gently gushes,
His healthy limbe in quiet slumber hushes;—
— all self-private, serving God, he writes
Fearless, and sings but what his heart indites,
'Till Death, dread Servant of the Eternal Judge,
Comes very late to his sole-seated Lodge.—

Let me, Good Lord! among the Great unkenn'd
My rest of days in the calm country end:
My company, pure thoughts, to work thy will,
My court, a cottage on a lowly hill."

So popular was this version in the early part of the seventeenth century, that Jonson, no indiscriminate encomiast, exclaims, in an epigram to the translator,

"Behold! the rev'rend shade of Bartas stands
Before my thought, and in thy right commands,
That to the world I publish for him this,
'Bartas doth wish thy English now were his.'
So well in that are his inventions wrought,
As *his* will now be the *translation* thought;
Thine the *original*; and France shall boast
No more the maiden glories she has lost."†

The greatest compliment, however, which Sylvester has received, is the imitation of Milton.

The virtues of Sylvester were superior to his talents; he was, in fact, to adopt the language of one of his intimate friends, a poet

"Whom Envy scarce could hate; whom all admir'd,
Who liv'd beloved, and a Saint expir'd."‡

34. TURBERVILLE, GEORGE, a younger son of Nicholas Turberville, of Whitechurch, in Dorsetshire, a gentleman of respectable family, was born about the year 1540. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, and in 1562 became a member of one of the Inns of Court. Here the reputation which he had acquired for talents and the dispatch of business, obtained for him the appointment of secretary to Thomas Randolph, Esq., ambassador to the Court of Russia, and, whilst in this country, he employed his leisure in writing poems descriptive of its manners and customs, addressed to Spenser, Dancie, and Park, and afterwards published in Hakluyt's Voyages, 1598, vol. I. pp. 384, 385.

On his return from this tour, he added greatly to his celebrity as a scholar and

* Vide Wood's Athenæ, vol. i. p. 594; and Philips's Theatrum.

† One of the Epigrams prefixed to the folio edition of Sylvester's Works. Ten pages in the copy of 1641 are occupied by commendatory Poems on the Translator.

‡ Lines by Viccars, under the portrait of Sylvester, in the edition of 1641.

a gentleman, by the publication of his "Epitaphes, epigrams, songs, and sonets, with a discourse on the friendly affections of Tymetes to Pyndara his ladie," 8vo. 1567. This year, indeed, appears to have been fully occupied by him in preparing his works for the press; for, during its course, independent of the collection just mentioned, he printed "The Heroycall Epistles of the learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso: with Aulus Sabinus answeres to certaine of the same," 8vo, and "The Eclogs of the poet B. Mantuan Carmelitan, turned into English verse, and set forth with the argument to every eclogue." 12mo. These productions, with his "Tragical Tales, translated in time of his troubles, out of Sundrie Italians, with the argument and L'Envoye to each tale," printed in 1576, and again in 1587, with annexed "Epitaphs and Sonets, and some other broken pamphlettes and Epistles," together with some pieces of poetry in his "Art of Venerie," and in his "Booke of Faulconrie or Hauking," 1575, and a few commendatory stanzas addressed to his friends, form the whole of his poetical works.

Turberville enjoyed, as a writer of songs, sonnets, and minor poems, a high degree of popularity in his day; it was not, however, calculated for durability, and he appears to have been forgotten, as a poet, before the close of the seventeenth century. His muse has experienced a temporary revival, through the medium of Mr. Chalmers's English Poets, and to the antiquary, and lover of old English literature, this reprint will be acceptable; but, for the general reader, he will be found deficient in many essential points. Fancy, it is true, may be discovered in his pieces, although forced and quaint; but of nature, simplicity, and feeling, the portion is unfortunately small. Occasional felicity of diction, a display of classical allusion, and imagery taken from the amusements and customs of the age, are not wanting; but the warmth, the energy, and the enthusiasm of poetry are sought for in vain.

Our author survived the year 1594, though the date of his death is not known.

35. **TUSSER, THOMAS**, one of the most popular, and, assuredly, one of the most useful of our elder poets, was born, according to Dr. Mavor, about 1515, and died about 1583. The work which ushers him to notice here, and has given him the appellation of the English Varro, was published in 1557, and entitled "A Hundreth Good Pointes of Husbandrie," a small quarto of thirteen leaves. It was shortly followed by "One Hundreth Good Poyntes of Huswiffry;" and in 1573, the whole was enlarged with the title of "Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry, united to as many of Good Huswifery." The most complete edition, however, and the last in the author's life-time, was printed 1580. So acceptable did this production prove to the lovers of poetry and agriculture, that it underwent nineteen editions during its first century, and Dr. Mavor's edition, published in 1812, forms the last, and twenty-fourth. The mutilated state of the old copies, indeed, exemplifies, more than any thing else, the practical use to which they were subjected; "Some books," remarks Mr. Haslewood, "became heir-looms from value, and Tusser's work, for useful information in every department of agriculture, together with its quaint and amusing observations, perhaps passed the copies from father to son, till they crumbled away in the bare shifting of the pages, and the mouldering relic only lost its value, by the casual mutilation of time." That the estimation in which the poems of Tusser were held by his contemporaries, might lead to such a result, it may be allowable to conclude from the assertion of Googe, who, speaking of our author's works, says, that "in his fancie, they may, without any presumption, compare with any of the Varros, Columellas, or Palladios of Rome."

The great merit of Tusser's book, independent of the utility of its agricultural precepts, consists in the faithful picture which it delineates of the manners, customs, and domestic life of the English farmer, and in the morality, piety, and benevolent simplicity which pervade the whole. In a poetical light its pretensions are not great. The part relative to Husbandry is divided into months, and written in quatrains, of eleven syllables in each line, which are frequently

constructed with much terseness, and with happy epigrammatic brevity. The abstracts prefixed to each month, are given in short verses of four and five syllables each; and numerous illustrative pieces, and nearly the whole of the *Huswifery*, present us with a vast variety of metres, among which, as Ritson has observed, "may be traced the popular stanza which attained so much celebrity in the pastoral ballads of Shenstone."* Little that can be termed ornamental, either in imagery or episode, is to be found in this poem; but the sketches of character and costume, of rural employment and domestic economy, are so numerous, and given with such fidelity, raciness, and spirit, as to render the work in a very uncommon degree interesting and amusing.

36. WARNER, WILLIAM. Of the biography of this fine old poet, little has descended to posterity. He is supposed to have been born about the year 1558; and that he died at Amwell in Hertfordshire, and was by profession an attorney, are two of the principal facts which, by an appeal to the parish register of Amwell, have been clearly ascertained. In a note to his poem on this village, Mr. Scott first communicated this curious document:—"1608—1609. Master William Warner, a man of good yeares, and of honest reputation: by his profession an attorney of the Common Pleas: author of Albion's England, dying suddenly in the night in his bedde, without any former complaynt or sicknesse, on Thursday night, beeing the 9th day of March: was buried the Saturday following, and lyeth in the church at the corner, under the stone of Gwalter Fader." †

The lines which gave occasion to this extract form a pleasing tribute to the memory of the bard:

"He, who in verse his Country's story told,
Here dwelt awhile; perchance here sketch'd the scene,
Where his fair Argentile, from crowded courts
For pride self-banish'd, in sequester'd shades
Sojourn'd disguis'd, and met the slighted youth
Who long had sought her love—the gentle bard
Sleeps here, *by Fame forgotten.*"

The words in Italics which close this passage, were not at the time they were written correctly true, for Warner had then been a subject of great and judicious praise, both to Mrs. Cooper and Dr. Percy; and since the era of Scott, he has been imitated, reedited, and liberally applauded. He is conjectured to have been a native of Warwickshire, to have been educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and to have left the University without a degree, for the purpose of cultivating his poetical genius in the metropolis. His *Albion's England*, on which his fame is founded, was first printed in 1586, when the poet was probably about eight and twenty. It underwent six subsequent editions during the author's life-time, namely, in 1589, 1592, 1596, 1597, 1602, and 1606. ‡

This extensive poetic history, which is deduced from the deluge to the reign of Elizabeth, is distributed into twelve books, and contains seventy-seven chapters; it is dedicated to Henry Cary, Lord Hudson, under whose patronage and protection Warner appears to have spent the latter portion of his life. Such was the popularity of "*Albion's England*," that it threw into the shade what had formerly been the favourite collection, the "*Mirror for Magistrates*;" Warner was ranked by his contemporaries, says Dr. Percy, on a level with Spenser; they were called the Homer and Virgil of their age; § and Meres, speaking of the English tongue, declares, that by his (Warner's) pen, it "was much enriched and gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments." Less hyperbolical, and, therefore, more judicious praise was allotted him by Drayton, who, after noticing his incorrectnesses, adds with a liberal spirit—

* Bibliographia Poetica, p. 374.

† Ritson's Bibliographia Poetica, p. 384.

‡ See Sharpe's British Poets, No. LXXIX. p. 17.

§ Reliques, vol. ii. p. 239. 4th edit.

"yet thus let me say
 For my old friend, some passages there be
 In him, which I protest have taken me
 With almost wonder, so fine, so clear, and new,
 As yet they have been equalled by few;"

a decision which subsequent criticism has confirmed.

One of his most pleasing episodes, "Argentile and Curan," was inserted by Mrs. Cooper in her "Muses' Library," who justly terms it "a tale full of beautiful incidents, in the romantic taste, extremely affecting, rich in ornament, wonderfully various in stile, and, in short, one of the most beautiful pastorals I ever met with."* This was again republished by Percy in his "Reliques," † and finally honoured by Mason in the third volume of his Poems, 1796, where it forms a "Legendary Drama in five acts, written on the old English model." Ritson, Headley, and Ellis have furnished us with additional extracts, and at length "Albion's England" has found its place in the body of our English Poetry through the taste and exertions of Mr. Chalmers. ‡

Ease, simplicity, and pathos are the leading virtues of Warner's muse. He eminently excelled in depicting rural and pastoral life, and in developing those simple and touching emotions which pervade the innocent and artless bosom. His vices were those of his age, and may be included under the heads of delicacy, inequality, and quaintness; these expunged, his finer parts strongly interest our affections, and endear to us the memory of the good old bard.

37. WATSON, THOMAS, a once popular writer of sonnets, was born in London, and educated at Oxford, whence he returned to the metropolis for the purpose of practising the law. In 1581, his principal poetical work was entered on the Stationers' books, and afterwards published with the following title, though without date:—"The EKATOMΠΙΑΘΙΑ, or Passionate Centurie of Love, divided into two Parts: whereof the first expresseth the Author's Sufferance in Love: the latter, his long Farewell to Love and all his Tyrannie. Composed by Thomas Watson, Gentleman; and published at the Request of certeine Gentlemen his very Friends."

Of this Collection, which occupies a thin 4to, black letter, with a sonnet on each page, an admirable critical analysis has been given by Sir Egerton Bridges, in the twelfth number of the British Bibliographer, accompanied by seventeen specimens of the sonnets, and from this critique, and from the Theatrum Poetarum, edited by the same elegant scholar, we have drawn our account, for the original is so scarce as to be of hopeless acquisition.

It will strike the reader, in the first place, that the poems which Watson termed Sonnets, have no pretensions, in point of mechanism and form, to the character of the legitimate sonnet. Instead of the beautiful though artificial construction of the Petrarchan model, they consist of eighteen lines, including three quatrains in alternate rhyme, and a couplet appended to each quatrain; a system of verse totally destitute of the union and dignity which distinguish this branch of poetry in the practice of the Italians. It should be remarked, however, that our poet has occasionally given us a sonnet in Latin verse, in which he confines himself to fourteen lines, and, as he observes, in the Introduction to his sixth sonnet, "commeth somewhat neerer unto the Italian phrase than the English doth." § Watson was, indeed, an elegant Latin poet, and in the matter prefixed to his first and sixth sonnets, informs us that he had written a poem "De Remedio Amoris," and that he was then "busied in translating Petrarch his sonnets into Latin,—which one day may perchance come to light."** In fact there appears to be more of true poetry in his Latin than in his English verse; for though to the "Centurie of Love" must be attributed great purity, correctness, and perspicuity of diction, and a versification uncommonly polished, harmonious,

* Edit. 1741. p. 157.

§ British Bibliographer, No. xii. p. 7.

† Vol. ii. p. 238.

** Ibid. p. 5, 7.

‡ Vol. iv. p. 499.

and well sustained, yet the soul of poetry, tenderness, simplicity, and energy of sentiment, will be found wanting. In their place Watson has bestowed upon us a multitude of metaphysical conceits, an exuberant store of classical mythology, and an abundance of learned allusion; but to adopt the interesting observations of the critic mentioned in the preceding paragraph, "to meditate upon a subject, till it is broken into a thousand remote allusions and conceits; to accustom the mind to a familiarity with metaphysical subtleties and casual similitudes in contradictory objects, is to cultivate intellectual habits directly opposite to those from whence real poetry springs; and to produce effects directly opposite to those which real poetry is intended to produce.

"The real poet does but pursue, fix, and heighten those day-dreams which every intellectual being more or less at times indulges; though the difference of the degree, as well as of the frequency, in which individuals indulge them, is incalculable; arising from the difference of mental talent and sensibility, as well as of cultivation. But who is there in whose fancy some absent image does not occasionally revive? And who is there so utterly dull and hard, that in him it arises unassociated with the slightest emotion of pain or pleasure? Yet in what abundance and richness of colouring such images are constantly springing up in the mind of the poet? Visions adhere to the boughs of every tree; and painting what he sees and feels with his natural enthusiasm, he carries the reader of sensibility along with him; kindles his fainter ideas into a flame; draws forth the yet weak impression into body and form; and irradiates his whole brain with his own light. The chords of the heart are touched; and while thus played upon produce enchanting music; till, as the spell is silent, the object of this borrowed inspiration is astonished to find, that all this brilliant entertainment sprung from the wand of the poetical magician.

"If this be the secret of true poetry, what is he who seeks to convey images so unnatural, that no one had ever even an imperfect glimpse of them before, and no one can sympathize with them when expressed? Can he whose thoughts find no mirror in the minds of others be a poet? Is not a metaphysical poet a contradiction of terms?

"He who adopts these principles, will think of Watson as I do.—Has he painted the natural emotions of the mind, or of the heart? Has he given

"A local habitation and a name"

to those 'airy nothings' which more or less haunt every fancy? Or has he not sat down rather to exercise the subtlety of his wit, than to discharge the fullness of his bosom?"*

Yet has Watson, with these vital defects, been pronounced by Mr. Steevens superior as a sonneteer to Shakspeare; a preference which we shall have occasion to consider in the chapter appropriated to the minor parts of our great dramatist.

Beside the "*Hekatompathia*," Watson published, in 1561, a Latin translation of the *Antigone* of Sophocles; in 1582, "*Ad Olandum de Eulogiis serenissimæ nostræ Elizabethæ post Anglorum prælia cantatis, Decastichon*;" in 1586, a Paraphrase in Latin verse of the "*Raptus Helenæ*," of Coluthus; in 1590, an English Version of Italian Madrigalls, and "*Melibœus*, a Latin Eclogue on the death of Sir Francis Walsingham," 4to; in 1592, he printed "*Aminta Gaudia*," in hexameter verses, 4to; and beside other fugitive pieces. two poems of his are inserted in the "*Phoenix Next*, 1593, and in "*England's Helicon*," 1600.

Watson has been highly praised by Nash, by Gabriel Harvey, and by Meres; the latter asserting that "as Italy had Petrarch, so England had Thomas Watson."† He is supposed to have died about the year 1595, for Nash, in his "*Have with you to Saffron Walden*," printed in 1596, speaks of him as then deceased, adding, "that "for all things he has left few his equals in England."

* *British Bibliographer*, No. xii. p. 3, 4.

† *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 47.

38. WILLOBIE, HENRY. From the Preface of Hadrian Dorrell, to the first edition of Willobie's "Avisa," in 1594, in which he terms the author, "a young man, and a scholar of very good hope," there is foundation for conjecturing that our poet was born about the year 1595. It appears also from this prefatory matter, that, "being desirous to see the fashions of other countries for a time, he not long sithence departed voluntarily to her majestie's service," and that Dorrell, in his friend's absence, committed his poem to the press.* He gave it the following title, "Willobie his Avisa; or the true picture of a modest Maid and of a chaste and constant wife. In hexameter† verse. The like argument whereof was never heretofore published:" 4to. A second edition was published by the same editor in 1596, with an Apology for the work, dated June 30, and concluding with the information, that the author was "of late gone to God." A fourth impression, "corrected and augmented," consisting of 72 leaves 4to, made its appearance in 1609, with the addition of "the victorie of English Chastitie never before published," and subscribed "Thomas Willoby frater Henrici Willoby nuper defuncti."

Mr. Haslewood conjectures from Dorrell's calling Willobie his chamber-fellow, and then dating his Preface from his chamber in Oxford; and from a passage in the "Avisa" itself, that our author was educated in that university, and that he was a native of Kent.‡ We are told likewise by Dorrell, in his "Apologie," that his friend had written a poem entitled "Susanna," which still remained in manuscript.

The "Avisa," which consists of a great number of short cantos, is written to exemplify and recommend the character of a chaste woman, under all the temptations to which the various situations incident to her life, expose her. "In a void paper," says the editor, "rolled up in this book, I found this very name Avisa, written in great letters, a pretty distance asunder, and under every letter a word beginning with the same letter, in this forme:—

A.	V.	I.	S.	A.
Amans.	Vxor.	Inviolata.	Semper.	Amanda.

That is, in effect, A loving wife that never violated her faith is alwayes to be beloved. Which makes me conjecture, that he minding for his recreation to set out the idea of a constant wife (rather describing what good wives should do than registering what any hath done), devised a woman's name that might fitly expresse this woman's nature whom he would aim at: desirous in this (as I conjecture) to imitate a far off, either Plato in his commonwealth, or More in his Utopia."§ Prefixed are two commendatory copies of verses, of which the second, signed "Contraria Contrariis," is remarkable for an allusion to Shakspeare's "Rape of Lucrece," and will be noticed hereafter.

Of invention and enthusiasm, the poet's noblest boast, few traits are discover—

* In the Apologie of Dorrell, dated 1596, and annexed to the second edition, he tells us, that "this poetical fiction was penned by the author at least for thirty-and-five yeares sithence." "If there was sufficient ground for this assertion," remarks Mr. Haslewood, "it fixes the time of the composition about 1561, and supposing the author then, as seems reasonable to presume, to have attained his twenty-first year, it places the time of his birth, as conjecturally fixed by Mr. Ellis, at 1540. However, some doubt arises whether this inference is not contradicted by the preface of 1594, which describes the author not only as 'a scholar of very good hope,' but also as a 'young man,' who, desirous of seeing the fashions of other countries, had, 'not long sithence,' departed voluntarily in Her Majesty's service. Here the most enlarged meaning bestowed on the expression 'not long sithence,' can neither explain the sentence that calls him a 'scholar of very good hope,' nor that of a 'young man,' whereby they shall be terms applicable to a person who had written thirty years before, and from the above inference might have been then in the fifty-fourth year of his age. It is probable the preface may be relied on; otherwise the author's departure from this country will be found too remote for the term of any voluntary engagement, civil or military, that could be attached to foreign service. Dorrell's subsequent anachronism may be ascribed to inadvertency: to a zealous but hurried attempt to parry the attack of the critic, by the supposed youth of the writer; and by fixing the composition at a period sufficiently early to prevent an unfavourable comparison with more recent productions." British Bibliographer, No. XIV. p. 242.

† The term hexameter is here meant to designate stanzas consisting of six lines.

‡ British Bibliographer, No. XIV. p. 243.

§ Ibid. p. 245.

able in the *Avisa*, nor can it display any vivid delineation of passion; but it occasionally unfolds a pleasing vein of description, and both the diction and metre are uniformly clear, correct, and flowing. Indeed, the versification may be pronounced, for the age in which it appeared, peculiarly sweet and well modulated, and the whole poem, in language and rhyme, makes a close approximation to modern usage.

39. WITHER, GEORGE. This very voluminous writer is introduced here, in consequence of his "*Juvenilia*," which constitute the best of his works, having been all printed or circulated before the death of Shakspeare. He was born at Bentworth, near Alton in Hampshire, in 1590, and, after a long life of tumult, vicissitude, and disappointment, died in his seventy-eighth year, in 1667. He continued to wield his pen to the last month of his existence, and more than one hundred of his pieces, in prose and verse, have been enumerated by Mr. Park, in a very curious and elaborate catalogue of his works. We shall confine ourselves, however, for the reason already assigned, to that portion of his poetry which was in circulation previous to 1616.

It appears from Wither's own catalogue of his works,* that four of his earliest poems, entitled "*Iter Hibernicum*," "*Iter Boreale*," "*Patrick's Purgatory*," and "*Philaret's Complaint*," were lost in manuscript. The first of his published productions was printed in 1611, under the title of "*Abuses Stript and Whipt: or Satyricall Essays. Divided into two Bookes*;" 8vo, to which were annexed "*The Scourge*," a satire, and "*Certaine Epigrams*," This book, he tells us, was written in 1611, and its unsparing severity involved him in persecution, and condemned him for several months to a prison. It was nevertheless highly popular, and underwent an eighth impression in 1633.

An elegant writer in the *British Bibliographer* has subjoined the following very just and interesting remarks to his notice of these poignant satires. "The reign of King James," he observes, "was not propitious to the higher orders of poetry. All those bold features, which nourished the romantic energies of the age of his predecessor, had been suppressed by the selfish pusillanimity and pedantic policy of this inglorious monarch. Loving flattery, and a base kind of luxurious ease, he was insensible to the ambitions of a gallant spirit, and preferred the cold and barren subtleties of scholastic learning to the breathing eloquence of those who were really inspired by the muse. Poetical composition therefore soon assumed a new character. Its exertions were now overlaid by learning, and the strange conceits of metaphysical wit took place of the creations of a pure and unsophisticated fancy. It was thus that Donne wasted in the production of unprofitable and short-lived fruit the powers of a most acute and brilliant mind. It was thus that Phineas Fletcher threw away upon an unmanageable subject the warblings of a copious and pathetic imagination. The understanding was more exercised in the ingenious distortion of artificial stores, than the faculties which mark the poet in pouring forth the visions of natural fiction.

" Such scenes as youthful poets dream,
On summer eve, by haunted stream,

were now deemed insipid. The Fairy Fables of Gorgeous Chivalry were thought too rude and boisterous, and too unphilosophical for the erudite ear of the book-learned king!

"As writers of verse now brought their compositions nearer to the nature of prose, the epoch was favourable to the satirical class, for which so much food was furnished by the motley and vicious manners of the nation. Wither, therefore, bursting with indignation at the view of society which presented itself to his young mind, took this opportunity to indulge in a sort of publication, to which the prosaic taste of the times was well adapted; but he disdained, and, perhaps, felt himself unqualified, to use that glitter of false ornament, which was now sub-

* At the end of his "*Fides Anglicanæ*," 1660.

stituted for the true decorations of the muse. ‘I have arrived,’ says he, ‘to be as plain as a pack-saddle.’—‘Though you understand them not, yet because you see this wants some fine phrases and flourishes, as you find other men’s writings stuffed withal, perhaps you will judge me unlearned.’—‘Yet I could with ease have amended it; for it cost me, I protest, more labour to observe this plainness, than if I had more poetically trimmed it.’”*

The plainness of which Wither here professes himself to have been studious, forms one of the noblest characteristics of his best writings. Dismissing with contempt the puerilities and conceits which deformed the pages of so many of his contemporaries, he cultivated, with almost uniform assiduity, a simplicity of style, and an expression of natural sentiment and feeling, which have occasioned the revival of his choicest compositions in the nineteenth century, and will for ever stamp them with a permanent value.

Returning to his *Juvenilia*, we find that in 1612 he published in a thin quarto, “*Prince Henrie’s Obsequies; or mournfull Elegies upon his Death. With a supposed Interlocution between the Ghost of Prince Henry and Great Britaine;*” which was followed the succeeding year by his “*Epithalamia: or Nuptiall Poemes,*” 4to, on the marriage of Frederick the Fifth, with Elizabeth, only daughter of James the First. These pieces have been re-printed, by Sir Egerton Brydges, in his “*Restituta:*” the *Obsequies* contain forty-five elegiac sonnets, succeeded by an Epitaph, the *Interlocution*, and a Sonnet of Death, in Latin rhymes, with a paraphrastic translation. Among the numerous sonnet-writers of the age of Shakspeare, Wither claims a most respectable place, and many of these little elegies deserve a rescue from oblivion. We would particularly point out Nos. 14 and 17, from which an admirable sonnet might be formed by subjoining six lines of the former to the first two quartorzains of the latter, and this without the alteration of a syllable; the octave will then consist of a soliloquy by the poet himself, and the sestina be addressed to Elizabeth the sister of Prince Henry; a transition which is productive of a striking and happy effect:—

“Thrice happy had I been, if I had kept
Within the circuit of some little Village,
In ignorance of Courts and Princes slept,
Manuring of an honest halfe-plough tillage:
Or else, I would I were as young agen
As when *Eliza*, our last *Phœnix* died;
My childish yeares had not conceived then

What ’twas to lose a Prince so dignified:—
Thy brother’s well: and would not change estates
With any prince that reigns beneath the skie:
No, not with all the world’s great potentates:
His plumes have born him to eternitie!—
He shall escape (for so th’ Almighty wills)
The stormy Winter of ensuing ills.”†

In 1614, our author published “*A Satyre written to the King’s most excellent Majestie,*” 8vo; and “*The Shepherds Pipe,*” 8vo; the latter, a production of high poetical merit, having being composed in conjunction with Browne, the author of *Britannia’s Pastorals*.

In 1615, appeared “*The Shepheard’s Hunting: Being certaine Eglogues, written during the time of the Author’s imprisonment in the Marshalsey,*” 8vo. This was intended as a continuation of the “*Shepheard’s Pipe,*” and is fully equal, if not superior, to the prior portion: Phillips, indeed, speaking of Wither, says, “the most of poetical fancy, which I remember to have found in any of his writings, is in a little piece of pastoral poetry, called “*The Shepheard’s Hunting.*”‡

The next work with which Wither favoured us, though not published for general circulation before 1619, yet, as the stationer, George Norton, tells us, had been “long since imprinted for the use of the author, to bestow on such as had voluntarily requested it in way of adventure; words which seem to intimate, that it had been dispersed for the purpose of pecuniary return, and probably with the intent of supporting the bard during his imprisonment in the Marshalsea. It has accordingly a title-page which implies a second impression, and is termed “*Fi-*

* British Bibliographer, No. I. p. 4. 5.

‡ Theatrum Poetarum, edit. 1675.

† Restituta, No. VI. p. 394.

delia. Newly corrected and augmented." This is a work which ought to have protected the memory of Wither from the sarcasms of Butler, Swift, and Pope; for it displays a vein of poetry at once highly elegant, impassioned, and descriptive. To "Fidelia" was first annexed the two exquisite songs, reprinted by Dr. Percy, commencing

" Shall I, wasting in dispaire,"

and

" Hence away, thou Syren, leave me." *

We shall close the list of those works of Wither that fall within the era to which we are limited, by noticing his "Faire Virtue: the Mistresse of Phil'arete," 8vo. This beautiful production, glowing with all the ardours of a poetic fancy, was one of his earliest compositions, and is alluded to in his "Satire to the King," in 1614, before which period there is reason to suppose it was widely circulated in manuscript; for in a prefatory epistle to the copy of 1622, published by John Grismand, but which was originally prefixed to an anonymous edition printed by John Marriot, and not now supposed to be in existence, Wither tells us, that "the poem was composed many years ago, and, unknown to the author, got out of his custody by an acquaintance;" and he adds, "when I first composed it, I well liked thereof, and it well enough became my years." To high praise of this work in its poetical capacity, Mr. Dalrymple has annexed the important remarks, that it unfolds a more perfect system of female tuition than is any where else to be discovered.

The great misfortune of Wither was, that the multitude of his subsequent publications, many of which were written during the effervescence of party zeal, and are frequently debased by coarse and vulgar language, overwhelmed the merits of his earlier productions. Yet it must be conceded, that his prose, during the whole period of his authorship, generally exhibits great strength, perspicuity, and freedom from affectation; and on the best of his poetical effusions we may cheerfully assent to the following encomium of an able and impartial judge:—"If poetry be the power of commanding the imagination, conveyed in measure and expressive epithets, Wither was truly a poet. Perhaps there is no where to be found a greater variety of English measure than in his writings (Shakspeare excepted), more energy of thought, or more frequent development of the delicate filaments of the human heart." †

40. WOTTON, SIR HENRY. This elegant scholar and accomplished gentleman was forty-eight years of age when Shakspeare died, being born at Boughton-Hall in Kent, in 1568. His correspondence with Milton on the subject of Comus in 1638, is on record, and it is highly probable that, on his return from the Continent in 1598, after a residence of nine years in Germany and Italy, he would not long remain a stranger either to the reputation or the person of the great Dramatic Luminary of his times.

Having mentioned these great poets as contemporaries of Sir Henry Wotton, it may be a subject of pleasing speculation to conjecture how far they could be personally known to each other. The possibility of some intercourse of this kind, though transient, seems to have forcibly struck the mind of an elegant poet and critic of the present day; speaking of Comus, presented at Ludlow-Castle in 1634, he remarks,—"Much it has appeared to me of the Shakspearean diction and numbers and form of sentiment may be traced in this admirable and delightful Drama: in which the streams of the Avon mix with those of the Arno, of the Mincius, and the Ilissus. Part of MILTON's affectionate veneration, beside what arises from congenial mind, may have arisen from personal respect. At the death of SHAKSPEARE, MILTON was in his eighth year.

* Reliques, vol. iii. 4th edit. p. 190—264.

† Dalrymple's Extracts from Wither's Juvenilia, 1785.

— “ *Heroum laudes et facta Parentum
Jam legere, et quæ sit poterat cognoscere Virtus.* ”

“ It is hardly probable that they never met. Shakspeare, if they did see each other, could not but be charmed with the countenance and manners of a boy like Milton; and Milton, whose mind was never childish, and whose countenance at ten has the modest but decisive character of his high destiny, would feel the interview; his young heart would dilate, and every recollection would bring Shakspeare, once seen and heard, to his remembrance and imagination with increasing force.” *

The most powerful circumstance which militates against this interesting supposition, is, that, if such an interview had taken place, we should, in all probability, have found it recorded in the minor poems, Latin or English, of Milton, who has there preserved many of the occurrences of his youthful days, and would scarcely have failed, we think, to put the stamp of immortality on such an event.

The poetry of Wotton, though chiefly written for the amusement of his leisure, and through the excitement of casual circumstances, possesses the invaluable attractions of energy, simplicity, and the most touching morality; it comes warm from the heart, and whether employed on an amatory or didactic subject, makes its appropriate impression with an air of sincerity which never fails to delight. Of this description are the pieces entitled, “ A Farewell to the Vanities of the World; ” the “ Character of a Happy Life, ” and the Lines on the Queen of Bohemia. One of his earliest pieces, being “ written in his youth, ” was printed in Davison’s “ Poetical Rhapsody, ” 1602, and his Remains were collected and published by his amiable friend Isaac Walton. Sir Henry died, Provost of Eton, in December, 1639, in the seventy-third year of his age.

In drawing up these Critical Notices of the principal poets who, independent of the Drama, flourished during the life-time of Shakspeare, we have been guided chiefly by the consideration of their positive merit, or great incidental popularity; and few, if any, who, on these bases, call for admission, have probably been overlooked. There is one poet, however, whose memory has been preserved by Philips, and of whom, from the high character given of him by this critic, it may be necessary to say a few words; for if the following eulogium on the compositions of this writer be not the result of a marked partiality, it should stimulate to an ardent enquiry after manuscripts so truly valuable.

“ JOHN LANE, a fine old Queen Elizabeth’s gentleman, who was living within my remembrance, and whose several Poems, had they not had the ill fate to remain unpublisht, when much better meriting than many, that are in print, might possibly have gained him a name not much inferior, if not equal to Drayton, and others of the next rank to Spenser; but they are all to be produc’t in manuscript, namely his “ Poetical Vision, ” his ‘ Alarm to the Poets, ’ his ‘ Twelve Months, ’ his ‘ Guy of Warwick, a Heroic Poem ’ (at least as much as many others that are so entitled), and lastly his ‘ Supplement to Chaucer’s Squire’s Tale. ’ ” †

It has happened unfortunately for Lane, that the only specimen of his writings which has met the eye of a modern critic, has proved a source of disappointment. Warton, after recording that a copy of Lane’s supplement to Chaucer existed in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, adds, “ I conceived great expectations of him on reading Phillips’s account. But I was greatly disappointed, for Lane’s performance, upon perusal, proved to be not only an inartificial imitation of Chaucer’s manner, but a weak effort of invention.” ‡ This discovery, however, should not arrest all future research; for his four preceding poems, of which the latter two must necessarily, from their titles, be of considerable length, may yet warrant the decision of Phillips. §

* “ Laura : or an Anthology of Sonnets. ” By Capel Lofft. 5 vols. Pref. p. cxliv.

† Theatrum Poetarum apud Brydges, p. 318, 319. ‡ Observations on Spenser, vol. i. p. 155, 156.

§ It may be useful in this note, to place, in immediate juxta-position, the names of the Poets

To this brief summary of Master-Bards we shall now subjoin, in a tabular and alphabetic form, a catalogue of those numerous minor poets who were content to follow in the train of more splendid talent. In carrying this arrangement into execution, it will not be necessary, after the example of Ritson, to dignify with the name of poet every individual who contributed a single copy of verses, as a tribute to contemporary merit—a prostitution of the title which appears truly ridiculous; for though bulk be no proof of excellence, yet were we to assign the name of poet to every penner of a stanza, the majority of those who barely read and write, might be included in the list. To those alone, therefore, who either published themselves, or had their productions thrown into a collective form by others, will the appellation be allotted.

With a view to simplicity and brevity, the Table will consist but of three parts; the first, occupied by the names of the poets; the second, by abbreviated titles of their works, with their dates; and the third, in order to prevent the frequent repetition of similar epithets, will contain arbitrary marks, designative of the general merit of their writings, and forming a kind of graduated scale. Thus *mediocrity* will be designated by a line (|); *excellence* will be expressed by eight asterisks before the mark of mediocrity (*****|); and absolute *worthlessness* by eight after it (|*****). While the intermediate shades of merit will be sufficiently pointed out by the intervening asterisks. Occasional notes, where peculiarity of any kind may call for them, will be added.

On this plan of tabular construction, the tediousness of a mere catalogue will, in a great measure, be avoided; and, at the same time, an adequately accurate view be given of the multiplicity and diffusion of poetical composition which pervaded this fertile period.

whom we have thus enumerated, as leaders of a great portion of their Art, during a period of half a century.

1. Beaumont, Sir John.—2. Breton.—3. Browne.—4. Chalkhill.—5. Chapman.—6. Churchyard.—7. Constable.—8. Daniel.—9. Davies.—10. Davors.—11. Donne.—12. Drayton.—13. Drummond.—14. Fairfax.—15. Fitzgeffrey.—16. Fletcher, Giles.—17. Fletcher, Phineas.—18. Gascoigne.—19. Greene.—20. Hall.—21. Harington.—22. Jonson.—23. Lodge.—24. Marlowe.—25. Marston.—26. Niccols.—27. Raleigh.—28. Sackville.—29. Southwell.—30. Spenser.—31. Stirling.—32. Sydney.—33. Sylvester.—34. Turberville.—35. Tusser.—36. Warner.—37. Watson.—38. Willobie.—39. Wither.—40. Wotton.—Lane.

TABLE OF MINOR MISCELLANEOUS POETS, DURING THE AGE OF SHAKSPEARE.

SCALE.

Excellence.	Mediocrity.	Absolute Worthlessness.
*****	*****	*****

<i>Acheley, Thomas.</i> "A most lamentable and tragical Historie." 12mo.	1576	
A translation from a novel of Bandello.		*
<i>Anderson, James.</i> Ane godly treatis, calit the first and second cumming of Christ, with the tone of the wintersnycht. 16mo. Edin.	1595	*
<i>Andrewe, Thomas.</i> The Unmasking of a feminine Machiavell. 4to.	1604	*
<i>Anneson, James.</i> Carolana, that is to say, a Poeme in Honour of our King, Charles-James, Queen Anne, and Prince Charles, &c. 4to.	1614	
<i>Arthington, Henry.</i> Principall Points of Holy Profession. 4to.	1607	**
<i>Aske, James.</i> Elizabetha Triumphans. 4to. Blank Verse.	1588	*
<i>Avale, Lemeke.</i> A Commemoration or Dirge of bastarde Edmonde Boner. 8vo.	1659	
<i>Balnevis, Henry.</i> Confession of Faith, conteining how the troubled man should seeke refuge at his God. 12mo. Edin.	1584	
<i>Barnefelde, Richard.</i> Cynthia with certeyne Sonnettes and the Legend of Cassandra.	1594	
The Affectionate Shepherd. 16mo. †	1595	*
The Encomion of Lady Pecunia. 4to.	1598	
<i>Barnes, Barnabe.</i> Parthenophil and Parthenope. Sonnettes, Madrigales, Elegies and Odes.	1593	*
A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnettes. ‡	1595	*
<i>Bastard, Thomas.</i> Chrestoleros. Seven Books of Epigrams. 8vo. §	1595	*
<i>Batman, Stephen.</i> The Travayled Pylgrime. 4to.	1569	***
<i>Beverley, Peter.</i> The History of Ariodanto and Jeneura. 8vo. 2d edit. From Ariosto.	1600	
<i>Bieston, Roger.</i> The Bayte and Snare of Fortune. Folio. ten leaves. No date. ††		
<i>Blenerhasset, Thomas.</i> The Seconde Part of the Mirrour for Magistrates. 4to.	1578	*
<i>Boucher, Arthur.</i> A Fable of Æsop Versified. 8vo.	1566	
<i>Bourman, Nicholas.</i> A Friendelie Well Wishinge to such as endure. A Ballad.	1581	
<i>Bradshaw, Thomas.</i> The Shepherd's Starre. 4to.	1591	
<i>Brathwayte, Richard.</i> The Golden Fleece, with other poems. Sm. 8vo.	1611	
The Poets Willow, or the Passionate Shepherd. 8vo.	1614	

† "Here, through the course of twenty sonnets, not inelegant, and which were exceedingly popular, the poet bewails his unsuccessful love for a beautiful youth, by the name of Ganymede, in a strain of the most tender passion, yet with professions of the chastest affection." *Warton's Hist.* vol. iii. p. 405.—It was the fashion, at this period, to imitate the second Eclogue of Virgil.

‡ The Sonnets of Barnes, which are written in strict adherence to the recurring *rima* of the Italian school, frequently possess no inconsiderable beauties. The Sonnet on Content, selected by Mr. Beloe (vol. ii. p. 78), from Parthenophil, is highly pleasing and harmonious, and at least twenty of his centenary may be pronounced, both in imagery and versification, above mediocrity.

§ Sheppard, in his Poems, 1651, remarks that "none in England, save Bastard and Harington, have divulged epigrams worth notice." A beautiful specimen of his Epigrams is given by Mr. Park, in "Censura Literaria," vol. iv. p. 375.

†† To this poet, Nash dedicated his "Strange Newes," &c. 1592, in the subsequent curious terms: "To the most copious carminist of our time, and famous persecutor of Priscian, his verie friend maister *Apis lapis*."—Vide *Ritson*, p. 131. note.

A Strappado for the Divell. Epigrams and Satyres. 8vo.	1615	
Brice, Thomas. The Courte of Venus Moralized.	1567	
Songes and Sonnettes.	1567	
Broughton, Rowland. A Briefe Discourse of the Lyfe and Death of the late Right High and Honourable Sir William Pawlet, Knight.	1572	**
Brooke, Thomas. Certayne Verses in the time of his imprisonment, the day before his deathe. Norwich.	1570	
Brooke, Christopher. Elegy on Prince Henry.	1613	
Eclogues. Dedicated to Wm Browne. †	1614	
Bryskett, Lodowick. The Mourning Muses of Lod. Bryskett upon the deathe of the most noble Sir Philip Sydney, knight. ‡	1587	*
Buc, Sir George. Δαφνις Πολυστεφανος. An Eclog treating of Crownes, and of Garlandes, and to whom of right they appertaine. 4to.	1605	*
Carew, Richard. "Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recoverie of Hierusalem." First Five Cantos translated from Tasso. First edition, no date. Second, 4to.	1594	*
Carpenter, John. A Sorrowfull Song for sinfull soules. 8vo.	1586	
Chester, Robert. "Loves Martyr, or Rosalins Complaint." From the Italian of Torquato Cœliano. "With the true Legend of famous King Arthur." §	1601	*
Chettle, Henry. The Pope's pitiful Lamentation for the death of his deere darling Don Joan of Austria. 4to.	1578	
"The Forest of Fancy." Consisting of apothegmes, histories, songs, sonnets and epigrams. 4to.	1579	
A Dolefull Ditty or sorowful sonet of the Lord Darly, some time King of Scots.	1579	
Chute, Anthony. Beawtie Dishonoured, written under the title of Shore's Wife. 4to.	1593	
Procris and Cephalus. ††	1593	*
Clapham, Henoch. A Briefe of the Bible's History; Drawne first into English poesy. 8vo. Edin.	1596	***
Copley, Anthony. Loves Owle; an idle conceited Dialogue betwene Love and an Olde-man. 4to.	1595	
A Fig for Fortune. 4to.	1596	**
Cottesford, Thomas. A Prayer to Dannyell.	1570	
Cotton, Roger. An Armor of Prooffe, brought from the Tower of David. 4to.	1596	
A Spirituall Song. 4to.	1596	
Culrose, Elizabeth. Ane Godly Dream. 4to. Edin.	1603	
Cutwode, T. Caltha-poetarum, or the Bumble Bee, 4to.	1599	
Davidstone, Johne. Ane Brief Commendation of Uprichtnes, &c. in Inglis Meter. 4to.	1573	
A Memorial of the Life and Death of two worthy Chritians. In English Meter. 8vo.	1595	
Davies, John. The Scourge of Folly. Consisting of satyricall Epigramms, etc. 8vo.	1611	
Humours Heavn on Earth.	1605	
Microcosmos. The Discovery of the Little World, with the government thereof. 4to.	1603	
The Muses Sacrifice; or Divine Meditations. 12mo.	1612	
Wittes Pilgrimage (by Poeticall Essaies), through a World of amorous Sonnets, etc. 4to. ††	16	

† For an account of this author, see British Bibliographer, No. VIII. p. 235. In this, as in other instances, I have only inserted the pieces published during the life of Shakspeare.

‡ Two pieces by this writer, entitled "The Mourning Muse of Thestylis," and "A Pastorall Aeglogue upon the Death of Sir Philip Sidney," have been inserted in Spenser's Works (Todd's edit. vol. viii. p. 66. et seq.), and probably form the contents of "The Mourning Muses." He is described by Spenser as a swain "Of gentle wit and daintie sweet device," and if, as Ritson asserts (Bibliograph. Poet. p. 146), "we probably owe much that has descended to us of the incomparable "Faery Queen," to this poet, we are greatly his debtors indeed.

§ To these poems by Chester, are added on the first subject, which, he tells us, "allegorically shadows the truth of love, in the constant fate of the phoenix and turtle," poems by Shakspeare, Jonson, Marston, Chapman, and others.—Vide Ritson, p. 159.

†† Ritson remarks,—"This is probably the poem alluded to in the Midsummer-Night's Dream :—

"Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true,
As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you."

Page. 170.

‡‡ That Wittes Pilgrimage was written before 1611, is evident from its being alluded to in his "Scourge for Paper-Persecutors:" annexed to the "Scourge of Folly," printed in this year.

A Select Second Husband for Sir Thos. Overburie's Wife.	Small 8vo.	1616	
Mirum in Modum. †		1602	**
<i>Davison, Francis.</i> } Sonnets, Odes, Elegies, Madrigals, and Epigrams, by Fran-			
<i>Davison, Walter.</i> } cis and Walter Davison, brethren.	12mo. ‡	1602	*
<i>Delone, Thomas.</i> Strange Histories, or songes and sonnets of kinges, princes, dukes, lords, ladyes, knights, and gentlemen : etc.	4to. §	1612	*
<i>Derricke, John.</i> The Image of Irelande.	4to.	1581	*
<i>Dowricke, Ann.</i> The French Historie.	4to.	1589	
<i>Drant, Thomas.</i> A Medicinable Morall, that is, the two bookes of Horace his satyres, englyshed, etc.	4to.	1566	
Horace his Arte of Poetrie, pistles, and satyres, englyshed.	4to.	1567	7
Greg. Nazianzen, his epigrammes, and spirituall sentences.	8vo. ††	1568	*
<i>Edwardes, C.</i> The Mansion of Myrthe		1581	
<i>Elderton, William.</i> Elderton's Solace in tyme of his sickness, contayning sundrie sonets upon many pithe parables.		1578	*
Various Ballads from 1560 to. ††		1590	*
<i>Elviden, Edmond.</i> The Closet of Counselles. Translated and collected out of divers aucthors into English verse.	8vo.	1569	
The History of Pisistratus and Catanea.	12mo.		
<i>Evans, Lewes.</i> The Fyrste twoo Satars or Poyses of Orace.		1564	
<i>Evans, William.</i> Thamesiades, or Chastities Triumph.	8vo. §§	1602	*
<i>Fenner, Dudley.</i> The Song of Songs. Translated out of the Hebrue into Englishe Meeter.	8vo.	1587	
<i>Fennor, William.</i> Fennor's Descriptions.	4to. †††	1616	*
<i>Ferrers, George.</i> Legends of Dame Eleanor Cobham and Humfrey Plantagenet—in the Myrrour for Magistrates,		1578	*
<i>Fetherstone, Christopher.</i> The Lamentations of Jeremie, in prose and meeter, with apt notes to singe them withall.	8vo.	1587	
<i>Fleming, Abraham.</i> The Bucolikes of P. Virgilius Maro, with alphabeticall annotations.		1575	*
The Georgiks or Ruralls : conteyning four books.	4to.	1589	*
<i>Fletcher, Robert.</i> An Epitaph or briefe Lamentation for the late Queene.	4to.	1603	
<i>Fraunce, Abraham.</i> The Lamentation of Amintas for the death of Phillis : paraphrastically translated out of Latine into English hexameters.	4to.	1588	*
"The Arcadian Rhetoricke." Verse and Prose.	8vo.	1588	*
The Countess of Pembroke's Emanuel. Conteyning the nativity, passion, burial, and resurrection of Christ : together with certaine psalmes of David.	4to.	1591	*

† Beside these productions here enumerated, Davies published, in 1617, "Wits Bedlam," 8vo; containing not less than 400 Epigrams, and about 80 Epitaphs. This writer usually designated himself by the title of John Davies of Hereford.—He also wrote "The Holy Rood, or Christ's Crosse," 1609.

‡ These poetical brothers published their poems with the above title, in a valuable Collection of Metrical Miscellanies, called "A Poetical Rapsodie," 1602, which will be noticed hereafter. They are introduced in the Table as being the principal contributors, and as distinguishing their pieces by a separate title or division.

§ This writer was the most popular ballad-maker of his day; he was by trade a silk-weaver, and the compiler of various Garlands, under the titles of "The Garland of Good Will;" "The Garland of Delight," &c. Nash, in his "Have with you to Saffron-Walden," 1596, says, that "his muse from the first peeping forth, hath stood at livery at an alehouse wispe, never exceeding a penny a quart day nor night; and this deere yeare, together with the silencing of his looms, scarce that; he being constrained to betake himself to carded ale: whence it proceedeth, that since "Candlemas," or his jigge of "John for the King;" not one merrie dittie will come from him, but "The thunder-bolt against swearers, Repent England, repent," and "The strange judgements of God."

†† Drant was a copious Latin Poet, having published two miscellanies under the titles of "Sylva," and "Poemata Varia."

†† A quotation from one of the songs or ballads of this drunken rhymer, is to be found in "Much Ado about Nothing," commencing

"The god of love,
That sits above."

§§ This poem, of which a prior edition is noticed in "Censura Literaria," vol. v. p. 349, as published in 4to, 1600, is conjectured by Ritson, p. 201, to have been the production of William Evans, who is well known to the lovers of old English poetry, by his eulogium prefixed to the first edition of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," 1500. The "Thamesiades," which consists of three books or cantos, is written with vigour, and exhibits some pleasing poetical pictures.

††† This thin volume of 22 leaves, consists of seven poetical speeches "spoken before the King and Queens most excellent Majestie, the Prince his highnesse, and the Lady Elizabeth's Grace."

The Countesse of Pembroke's Ivychurch. Containing the affectionate life, and unfortunate death of Phillis and Amyntas. 4to.	1591	*
The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembroke's Ivychurch: entitled: Amintas Dale. 4to.	1592	*
Heliodorus's Ethiopics. 8vo. †	1591	*
Freeman, Thomas. Rub and a Great Cast: and Runne and a Great Cast. The second bowle. In 200 Epigrams. 4to. ‡	1614	
Fulwell, Ulpian. The Flower of Fame. Containing the bright Renowne, and most fortunate raigne of King Henry the viij. 4to.	1575	**
Gale, Dunstan. Pyramus and Thisbe. §	1597	*
Gamage, William. Linsi-Woolsie: or Two Centuries of Epigrammes. 12mo. ††	1613	*****
Garter, Barnard. The Tragicall History of two English Lovers. 8vo.	1565	
Gifford, Humphrey. A Posie of Gilloflowers, eche differing from other in colour and odour, yet all sweete. 4to.	1580	*
Golding, Arthur. The xv. Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, a worke very pleasaunt and delectable. 4to.	1567	*
Googe, Barnaby. The Zodiake of Life, written by the godly and learned poet Marcellus Pallingenius Stellatus, wherein are conteyned twelve bookes. Newly translated into English Verse. 4to.	1565	
The Popish Kingdome, or reigne of Antichrist. Written in Latine verse by Thomas Naogeorgus, and Englyshed by Barnaby Googe. 4to, ††	1570	
The overthrow of the Gowte: written in Latin verse, by Chr. Balista, translated by B. G. 8vo. §§	1577	
Gordon, Patrick. The Famous History of the Valiant Bruce, in heroic verse. 4to.	1615	*
Gorges, Sir Arthur. The Olympian Catastrophe, dedicated to the memory of the most heroicall Lord Henry, late illustrious Prince of Wales, etc. By Sir Arthur Gorges, Knight. †††	1612	
Lucan's Pharsalia, containing the Civil Warres between Cæsar and Pompey. Written in Latine Heroicall Verse by M. Annæus Lucanus. Translated into English verse by Sir Arthur Gorges, Knight.	1614	*
Gosson, Stephen. Speculum Humanum. In stanzas of eleven lines. †††	1580	
Grange John. His Garden: pleasant to the eare and delightful to the reader, if he abuse not the scent of the floures. 4to. §§§	1577	*
Greene, Thomas. A Poet's Vision and a Prince's Glorie. 4to.	1603	
Greepe, Thomas. The true and perfect Newes of the woorthy and valiaunt exploytes, performed and doone by that valiant knight Syr Frauncis Drake. 4to.	1587	*
Grevile, Sir Fulke. Poems, viz.		
Cœlica, a collection of 109 songs.		
A Treatise of Human Learning, in 150 stanzas.		
Upon Fame and Honour, in 86 stanzas.		
A Treatise of Wars, in 68 stanzas.		

† Fraunce also published in a work of his, entitled "The Lawyers Logicke," 1588, an hexameter version of Virgil's *Alexis*. His affectation of Latin metres has condemned him to oblivion, for as Phillips justly remarks, "they neither become the English, nor any other modern language."—*Edit. apud Brydges*, p. 109.

‡ Wood tells us (*Ath. Oxon.* vol. i. p. 398), that Freeman was held in esteem by Donne, Daniel, Chapman, and Shakspeare; and to these poets, and to Spenser, he has addressed epigrams. For numerous specimens of this poet, see Warton, vol. iv. Ellis, and Park in *Censura Lit.* vol. iv. p. 129.

§ This poem was afterwards annexed to Greene's "History of Arbasto," 1617, where it is termed "a lovely poem." It was reprinted in 1626. On Greene's authority, I have ranked it beyond mediocrity.

†† A collection which consists, observes Mr. Park, "of the saddest trash that ever assumed the name of Epigrams."

†† The "Popish Kingdome" consists of four books, of which the last contains a curious and interesting description of feasts, holidays, and Christmas games; including, of course, many of the customs, and almost all the amusements of the period in which it was written.

§§ Besides these works, Googe published in 1563, "Eglogs, Epitaphs, and Sonnets," 12mo.

††† "A Poem in manuscript, of considerable length, together with some Sonnets, preserved amongst numerous treasures of a similar nature, which belonged to the late Duke of Bridgewater, and now belong to the Marquis of Stafford."—Todd's *Spenser*, vol. i. p. 87.

††† This poem was printed, says Ritson, at the end of Kenton's "Mirror of man's life," 1580. Gosson is introduced here in consequence of the celebrity attributed to him by Wood, who declares, that "for his admirable penning of pastorals, he was ranked with Sir P. Sidney, Tho. Chaloner, Edm. Spenser, Abrah. Fraunce, and Rich. Bernfield."

§§§ This forms the second part of a work by the same writer, called "The Golden Aphroditis," and consists of 19 pieces, four of which are in prose.

Remains, consisting of political and philosophical poems.			
† Poems in England's Helicon. †		1600	
Griffin, B. "Fidessa, more chaste than kinde." A collection of amatory sonnets.			
12mo.		1596	
Griffith, William. The Epitaph of the worthie Knight Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of Wales. Small 8vo.		1591	*
Grove, Matthew. The most famous and tragical historie of Pelops and Hippodamia. Whereunto are adjoynd sundrie pleasant devises, epigrams, songes, and sonnettes. 8vo.		1587	
Grymeston, Elizabeth. Miscellanea—Meditations—Memoratives. ‡		1604	*
Hake, Edward. A Commemoration of the most prosperous and peaceable raigne of our gracious and deere soveraigne lady Elizabeth. 8vo.		1575	
A Touchstone for the time present, etc. 12mo.		1574	*
Of Gold's Kingdom and this unhelping age, described in sundry poems. 4to.		1604	
Hall, Arthur. "Ten Books of Homer's Iliades." Translated from the French of Hugues Salel. 4to. §		1581	**
Hall, John. The Courte of Vertue, contayning many holy or spretuall songes, sonnettes, psalms, balletts, and shorte sentences, etc. 16mo.		1565	
Harbert, Sir William. Sidney, or Baripenthes, briefly shadowing out the rare and never-ending laudes of that most honorable and praise-worthy gent. Sir Philip Sidney, knight. 4to.		1586	
Harbert, William. A Prophesie of Cadwallader, last King of the Britaines, etc. 4to.		1604	
Harvey, Gabriel. Four Letters and Certaine Sonnets. ††		1492	* 1
Hawes, Edward. Trayterous Percy's and Catesby's Prosopopeia. 4to.		1609	
Heath, John. Two Centuries of Epigrammes. 12mo.		1610	
Herbert, Mary. A Dialogue betweene two Shepheards, in praise of Astrea, by the Countesse of Pembroke. ††		1602	
Heywood, Jasper. Various Poems and Devises. §§		1576	1
Heywood, Thomas. Troia Britanica: or, Great Britaine's Troy. A Poem, devided into 17 severall Cantons, etc. †††		1609	
Higgins, John. The First Part of the Mirour of Magistrates, contayning the falles of the first infortunate Princes of this Lande: from the comming of Brute to the incarnation of our Saviour, etc. 4to. †††		1575	
Holland, Robert. The Holie Historie of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's nativitie, life, actes, miracles, doctrine, death, passion, resurrection, and ascension, gathered into English meeter, etc. 8vo. §§§		1594	*
Howell, Thomas. The Arbor of Amitie; wherein is comprised pleasant poems and pretie poesies. 12mo. ††††		1568	* 1
Thomas Howell's Devises for his owne exercise and his friend's pleasure. 4to.		1581.	

† These pieces, written before 1620, were collected in his Works, folio, 1633, and in his "Remains," 1670. 8vo.

‡ Vide Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 109.

§ Warton observes, that "this translation has no other merit than that of being the first appearance of a part of the Iliad in an English dress."—Vol. iii. p. 440.

†† Beside these Sonnets, amounting to twenty-three, Harvey was the introducer of the miserable attempts to imitate the Latin metres, and boasts in this publication of being the first who exhibited English hexameters.

†† The celebrated sister of Sir Philip Sydney.

§§ All that are printed of these, appear in the Paradise of Daintie Devises, of the date annexed. He had previously translated three tragedies from Seneca, and died in 1598.

††† A writer known to greater advantage by his "Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels," folio, 1635; a work of singular curiosity and much amusement.

††† Higgins termed this the *first part*, merely in reference to the collection by Baldwin in 1559, which commencing at a much later period, was afterwards called "the last part." Higgins's publication, in 1575, contains 17 Legends from Albanact to Irenglas; but in 1587 he edited an edition of the Mirrour, including Baldwin's part, and with the addition of 24 Legends of his own composition, which carries forward his department to the death of Caracalla.

§§§ In the Dedication of this work, the fashionable reading of the times is thus reprobated:—Novelties in these days delight dainty eares, and fine filed phrases to fit some fantasy's, that no book except it abound with the one or the other, or both of these, is brooked of them. Some read 'Gascoyne,' some 'Guevasia,' some praise the 'Palace of Pleasure,' and the like, whereon they bestow whole days, yea, some whole months and years, that scarce bestow one minute on the Bible, albeit the work of God."

†††† For specimens of this volume, which is supposed to be unique, see British Bibliographer, No. II. p. 105.

<i>Hubbard, William.</i>	The Tragicall and Lamentable Historie of two saythfull mates, Ceyx kynge of Thrachyne, and Alcione his Wife.	1569	
<i>Hudson, Thomas.</i>	The Historie of Judith in forme of a Poeme. Translated from Du Bartas. 8vo.	1584	*
<i>Hume, Alexander.</i>	Hymnes, or Sacred Songes, wherein the right Use of Poesie may be espied. Edin. 4to.	1599	**
<i>Hunnis, William.</i>	A Hyve full of Hunnye, contayning the firste booke of Moses called Genesis, 4to.	1578	
	A Handfull of Honisuckles.	1578	*
	Seven Sobs of a Sorrowfull Soule for Sinne, etc. etc. 24to.	1585	*
<i>Jackson, Richard.</i>	The Battle of Floddon in nine fits.	1564	
<i>Jeney, Thomas.</i>	A Discours of the present troobles in Fraunce, and miseries of this time, compyled by Peter Ronsard, gentilman of Vandome;—translated by Thomas Jeney, gentilman. 4to.	1568	
<i>Jeninges, Edward.</i>	The Notable Hystory of two Faithfull Lovers, named Alfagus and Archelaus. Whearin is declared the true figure of amytie and freyndship. 4to.	1574	
<i>Johnson, Richard.</i>	The Nine Worthies of London. 4to.	1592	*
	Anglorum Lachrymæ, in a sad passion, complayning the death of our late Queene Elizabeth. 4to.	1603	*
<i>Kelly, Edmund.</i>	Poems on Chemistry, and on the Philosophers Stone. †	1591	**
<i>Kempe, William.</i>	A Dutifull Invective against the moste haynous treasons of Bal-lard and Babington, etc. 4to.	1587	*
<i>Kendall, Timothy.</i>	“Flowers of Epigrammes, out of sundrie the most singular au-thors, as wellauncient as late writers.” To which, as a second part, are added Trifles, by Timothie Kendal, devised and written (for the moste part) at sundrie tymes in his yong and tender age. 16mo. ‡	1577	
<i>Knell, Thomas.</i>	An Epitaph on the life and death of D. Boner, sometime unworthy Bishop of London, etc. 8vo.	1569	
	Answer to the most heretical and trayterous papistical bil, cast in the streets of Northampton, etc.	1570	
<i>Kyffin, Maurice.</i>	The Blessednes of Brytaine, or a celebration of the Queene’s holyday, etc. 4to.	1587	*
<i>Leighton, Sir William.</i>	The Teares or Lamentations of a Sorrowfull Soule. 4to.	1613	*
<i>Lever, Christopher.</i>	Queene Elizabeth’s Teares; or Her resolute bearing the Chris-tian Crosse, etc. 4to.	1607	*
<i>Linche, Richard.</i>	The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction. Wherein is lively depicted the Images and Statues of the Gods of the Ancients, etc. Done out of Italian into English. Verse and Prose. 4to.	1599	*
<i>Lisle, William.</i>	Babilon, a part of the seconde weeke of Guillaume de Saluste Seigneur du Bartas, with the Commentarie, and marginall notes of S. G. S.	1596	**
	The Colonyes of Bartas, with the commentarye of S. G. S. §	1597	**
<i>Lloyd, Lodowick.</i>	The Pilgrimage of Queenes. ††	1573	*
	Hilaria: or the triumphant feast for the fifth of August.	1607	*
<i>Lok, Henry.</i>	The Booke of Ecclesiastes; and Sundry Christian Passions, contayned in two hundred Sonnets. 4to. ‡‡	1597	***
<i>Lovell, Thomas.</i>	A Dialogue between Custome and Veritie, concerning the use and abuse of dauncing and minstrelsie. 8vo.	1581	
<i>Marbeck, John.</i>	The Holie Historie of King David. 4to.	1579	
<i>Markham, Gervase.</i>	The Poem of Poems, or Sion’s Muse, contayning the divine song of king Saloman, devided into eight eclogues. 8vo.	1595	

† Printed in Ashmole’s “Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum.”

‡ Perhaps the only piece above mediocrity in Kendall’s Epigrams is that, entitled “Martial to himself,” which I consider as very happily rendered.

§ For an account of this author, and of a poem of his printed in 1631, see Wood’s Fasti, vol. i. col. 147; and Censura Literaria, vol. i. p. 291.

†† A poem in Alexandrines, printed at the end of the first edition of his “Pilgrimage of Princes.”

‡‡ The 200 Sonnets are followed by 100, entitled “Sundry affectionate Sonets of a feeling conscience;” by 20, called “An Introduction to peculiar prayers,” and by 59, termed “Sonnets of the Author to divers.” In “The Return from Parnassus,” Lok is thus, not undeservedly, sentenced to oblivion:—“Locke and Hudson, sleep you, quiet shavers, among the shavings of the press, and let your books lie in some old nook amongst old boots and shoes: so, you may avoid my censure.”—*Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. p. 49.

The Most Honorable Tragedy of Sir Richard Grenvill knight ; a heroick poem. 8vo.	1595	
“Devoreux, Vertues Tears for the losse of the most Christian King Henry, third of that name, king of Fraunce ; and the untimely death of the most noble and heroicall gentleman, Walter Devoreux.” From the French of Madam Geneuesne Petau Maulette. 4to.	1597	*
The Tears of the Beloved, or the Lamentation of St. John, containing the death and passion of Christ. 4to.	1600	
Marie Magdalens Lamentations for the losse of her Master Jesus. 4to.	1601	
Ariosto's Satyres. 4to.	1608	
The Famous Whore, or Noble Curtizan, conteining the lamentable complaint of Paulina, the famous Roman curtizan, sometimes Mrs. unto the great cardinall Hypolito, of Est. 4to.	1609	
Maxwell, James. The Laudable Life, and Deplorable Death, of our late peerlesse Prince Henry, etc. 4to.	1612	*
Middleton, Christopher. The Historie of Heaven, containing the poetical fictions of all the starres in the firmament. 4to.	1596	
The Legend of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. 4to.	1600	
Middleton, Thomas. The Wisdome of Solomon paraphrased, 4to.	1597	
Montgomery, Alexander. The Cherrie and the Slae,† Edin. 4to.	1595**	
Muncaster, Richard. Nœnia Consolans, or a comforting complaint. Latin and English. 4to.	1603	*
Munday, Anthony. The Mirrour of Mutabilitie. Selected out of the sacred Scriptures. 4to.	1579	*
The Pain of Pleasure. 4to.	1580	*
The Fountayne of Fame.	1580	*
The Sweet Sobbes and Amorous Complaints of Sheppardes and Nymphes	1583	*
Munday's Strangest Adventure that ever happened. 4to.	1601	*
Murray, David. “The Tragickall Death of Sophonisba ;” in seven line stanzas, to which is added Cœlia : containing certaine Sonets. 12mo, ‡	1611	*
Newton, Thomas. Atropoion Delion : or the Death of Delia, with the teares of her funerall. 4to.	1603	
A Pleasant New History : or, a fragrant posie made of three flowers, rosa, rosalynd, and rosemary. §	1604	
Nicholson, Samuel. Acolastus, his after witte. 4to.	1600	
Nixon, Anthony. The Christian Navy, wherein is playnely described the perfect course to sayle to the haven of happiness. 4to.	1602	
Norden, John. The Storehouse of Varieties, an elegiacall poeme. 4to.	1601	
A Pensive Soules Delight. 4to.	1603	
The Labyrinth of Man's Life, or Vertues Delyght, and Envie's Opposite †† 4to.	1614	*
Overbury, Sir Thomas. A Wife : now the Widdow of Sir Thomas Overburie : being a most exquisite and singular poem of the Choise of a Wife. 4to: 4th edition. ††	1614	*
Parkes, William. The Curtaine-Drawer of the World : or, the Chamberlaine of that great Inne of Iniquity, etc. 4to.	1612	*

† It is to be regretted that no complete edition of the Works of Montgomery has hitherto been published. Those printed by Foulis and Urie in 1751 and 1754, are very imperfect ; but might soon be rendered faithful by consulting the manuscript collection of Montgomery's Poems, presented by Drummond to the University of Edinburgh.

‡ The Sonnets of Murray appeared five years anterior to those of Drummond, and though not equal to the effusions of the bard of Hawthornden, are yet entitled to the praise of skilful construction and frequently of poetic expression. A copy is now seldom to be met with ; but specimens may be found in Campbell's “History of Poetry in Scotland,” and in “Censura Literaria,” vol. x. p. 374, 375.

§ This poet, who, in the former part of his life, practised as a physician, at Butley, in Cheshire, was a Latin poet of some eminence, and one of the translators of Seneca's Tragedies, published in 1581.

†† For a specimen of this poem, see Beloe's Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 104.

‡‡ Though said to be the fourth edition, this copy is supposed by Mr. Neve to be really the first impression. Few poems have been more popular than Overbury's “Wife ;” owing partly to the good sense with which it abounds, and partly to the interesting and tragic circumstances which accompanied the author's fate. It was speedily and frequently imitated ; in 1614, appeared “The Husband. A poeme expressed in a compleat man,” by an anonymous writer ; in 1616 ; “A Select Second Husband for Sir Thomas Overburie's Wife,” by John Davies of Hereford ; in 1619, “The Description of a Good Wife,” by Richard Brathwaite ; and in the same year, “A Happy Husband, or Directions for a Maid to chose her Mate,” by Patrick Hammy. These pieces are inferior to their prototype, which, though not displaying much poetic inspiration, is written with elegance and perspicuity.

<i>Parrot, Henry.</i>	The Mouse Trap. Consisting of 100 Epigrams. 4to.	1606	
	The More the Merrier: containing three-score and odde headlesse epigrams, etc. 4to.	1608	
	"Epigrams." Containing 160. 4to.	1608	
	Laquei Ridiculi: or Springes for Woodcocks. In 2 bookes. 12mo.	1613	
<i>Partridge, John.</i>	The Most Famouse and Worthie Historie of the worthy Lady Pandavola, etc. 8vo.	1566	
	The Worthye Historie of the most noble and valiaunt knight Plasidas, etc. 8vo.	1566	
	The Notable Historie of two famous princes Astianax and Polixona. 8vo.	1566	
<i>Payne, Christopher.</i>	Christenmas-Carrolles	1569	
<i>Peacham, Henry.</i>	Minerva Britanna, or a Garden of Heroical Devises. 4to.	1612	*
<i>Peele, George.</i>	A Farewell, entituled to the famous and fortunate generalls of our English forces: Sir John Norris and Syr Francis Drake, knights, etc. Whereunto is annexed a tale of Troy. 4to.	1589	*
	Polyhymnia describing the honourable triumphs at tylt, before her Majestie, etc. 4to.	1590	*
	The Honour of the Garter: displaied in a poeme gratulatorie, etc. 4to. †	1593	*
<i>Peend, Thomas de la.</i>	The Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis. 8vo.	1565	*
	The Historie of John Lord Mandozze. From the Spanish. 12mo. ‡	1565	*
<i>Percy, William.</i>	Sonnets to the fairest Cælia.	1594	**
<i>Petowe, Henry.</i>	The Second Part of the Loves of Hero and Leander, etc. 4to.	1598	*
	Philochasander and Elanira the faire Lady of Britaine, etc. 4to. §	1599	*
	Elizabetha quasi vivans, Elizas funerall, etc. 4to.	1603	
	The Whipping of Runawaies.	1603	
<i>Pett, Peter.</i>	Times Journey to seek his Daughter Truth, and Truths letter to Fame, of England's excellencie. 4to.	1599	
<i>Philipp, John.</i>	A Rare and Strange Historicall Novell of Cleomenes and Sophonisba, surnamed Juliet; very pleasant to reade. 8vo.	1577	
	A Commemoration of the Right Noble and Vertuous Ladye Margrit Duglases Good Grace, Countes of Lennox, etc.	1578	*
<i>Phiston, William.</i>	A Lamentacion of Englande, for the Right Reverent Father in God, John Ivele, Doctor of Divinitie, and Bisshop of Sarisburie. 8vo.	1571	*
	The Welspring of Wittie Conceights, 4to. ††	1584	*
<i>Plat, Hugh.</i>	The Floures of Philosophie, with the Pleasures of Poetrie annexed to them, etc. 8vo. ‡‡	1572	*
<i>Powell, Thomas.</i>	The Passionate Poet, with a description of the Thracian Ismarus, in verse. 4to.	1601	
<i>Preston, Thomas.</i>	A Geliflower or swete marygolde, wherein the frutes of teranny you may beholde.	1569	*
<i>Pricket, Robert.</i>	A Souldier's Wish unto his Sovereign Lord, King James. 4to.	1603	*
<i>Proctor, Thomas.</i>	Pretie Pamphlets. 4to. §§	1578	*
<i>Puttenham, George.</i>	Partheniades. †††	1579	*

† Peele, who will afterwards be noticed as a dramatic poet, may be classed with Scoggan, Skelton, and Tarleton, as a buffoon and jester. He died before 1598, and his "Merrie conceited Jests" were published in 4to. in 1627.

‡ An ample analysis of "The Historie of Lord Mandozze," has been given in the British Bibliographer, No. X. p. 523; and No. XI. p. 587. Of the poetry of this very rare version, little laudatory can be said.

§ Of this scarce poem, unknown to Ritson, the reader will find a description by Mr. Haslewood in the British Bibliographer, No. III. p. 214.

†† Ritson, in his Bibliographia, says, that no one except Warton appears to have met with this publication; extracts from it, however, may be found in the Monthly Mirror, vol. xiv. p. 17.

‡‡ These Flowers are the production of one of the most celebrated agriculturists of the 16th century, the author of the "Jewell House of Art and Nature;" the "Paradise of Flora," the "Garden of Eden," &c. &c.; but, in his poetical capacity, they prove, as Mr. Park remarks, that he "did not attain to a plat of rising ground in the territory of Parnassus."—*Censura Lit.* vol. viii. p. 7.

§§ These are printed in the latter part of the miscellany, entitled "A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions."

††† Beside these verses in honour of Elizabeth, Puttenham wrote the "Isle of Great Britain," a little brief romance; "Elpine," an eclogue; "Minerva," an hymn; and, throughout his "Arte of Poesie," are

- Ramsey, Laurence.* Ramsie's Farewell to his late lord and master therle of Leicester. 1588
- Rankins, William.* Seven Satyres, etc. 1596
- Raynolds, John.* Dolarsy's Primerone; or the first part of the Passionate Hermit, etc. Written by a Practitioner in Poesie and a stranger amongst Poets. 4to. 1606 * |
- Rice, Richard.* An Invective against vices taken for vertue : gathered out of the Scriptures, etc. Svo. 1581
- Robinson, Richard.* The Rewarde of Wickednesse, discoursing the sundrye monstrous abuses of wicked and ungodly Worldelings, etc. 4to. 1574 | **
- A Dyall of Dayly Contemplacion, or divine Exercise of the Mind, etc. Verse and Prose. † 1578 | **
- Rolland, John.* Ane Treatise callit the Court of Venus, dividit into four Buikes. Edin. 4to. 1575
- The Sevin Seages, translatit out of Prois into Scottis meiter. Edin. 4to. 1578 |
- Rosse, J.* The Author's Teares upon the death of his honorable freende Sir William Sackville, knight of the ordre de la Colade in Fraunce : sonne to the right ho. the lorde Buckhurst Anno Dni ‡ 1592 * |
- Rous, Francis.* Thule, or Vertues Historie. In two books. The first booke. 4to. 1598
- Rowland, Samuel.* 1. The Betraying of Christ, etc. 4to. 1598
2. The Famous History of Guy Earle of Warwicke. 4to. . 1600
3. The Letting of Humours Blood in the headvaine : etc. 4to. § 1600
4. Looke to it for ile stabbe ye. 4to. . 1604
5. Democritus. . 1607
6. Humors Looking-Glasse. 8vo. . 1608
7. Hell Broke Loose, etc. 4to. . 1609
8. Doctor Merrieman, or nothing but mirth. 4to. . 1610
9. Martin Markal, beadle of Bridewell. 4to. . 1611
10. The Knave of Clubs, or 'tis merrie when Knaves meet. 4to. . 1611
11. The Knave of Hearts. 4to. . 1613
12. More Knaves Yet ; the Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. 4to. . 1615
13. The Melancholie Knight. 4to. †† . 1615
14. Tis Merrie when Gossips Meet ; newly enlarged, with divers songs. 4to. †† * |
- Sabie, Francis.* Pan his Pipe : conteyning three pastorall Eglogues in Englyshe hexameter ; with other delightfull verses. 4to. . 1595 * |
- The Fisser-mans Tale : of the famous Actes, Life and love of Cassauder a Grecian Knight. 4to. . 1595 |
- Flora's Fortune. The second part and finishing of the Fisherman's Tale, etc. §§ 1595

interspersed a number of verses, epigrams, epitaphs, translations, imitations, &c. Mr. Haslewood has prefixed a copy of "Partheniades" to his reprint of "The Arte of English Poesie," 1811.

† Of this work, not mentioned by Ritson, an account has been given by Mr. Haslewood in *Censura Literaria*, vol. iv. p. 241. The "Rewarde of Wickednesse" is written on the plan of the "Mirror for Magistrates," and was composed during the author's night-watches as one of the sentinels employed to guard the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. Robinson is supposed to be author of "The ruffull tragedy of Hemidos and Thelay," licensed in 1570.

‡ Ritson says, that this is "a poem in 168 six-line stanzas, of considerable merit, and with great defects: a 4to. MS. in the possession of Francis Douce, Esq."—Vide *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 315.

§ Several extracts from this work, consisting of seven satires, have been given by Warton in his *Fragment of Vol. IV.* See also *Censura Literaria*, vol. vi. p. 277; and Beloe's *Anecdotes*, vol. ii. p. 125, where further notices of this medley may be found. It went through subsequent editions in 1607 and 1611.

†† Curious specimens from this publication have been given by Mr. Haslewood in the *Brit. Bibliographer*, No. X. p. 549.

‡‡ Of this voluminous pamphleteer, five more pieces are enumerated by Ritson, published posterior to 1616. Though a rapid and careless writer, he occasionally exhibits considerable vigour, and has often satirized with spirit the manners and follies of his period. He may be justly classed as surmounting mediocrity, and he is therefore designated as such at the close of this article.

§§ This poem, and the Fisherman's Tale, are written in blank verse, a species of composition in which Sabie had been preceeded by Surrey, Gascoigne, Turberville, Riche, Peele, Higgins, Blenerhasset, Aske, Vallans, Greene, Breton, Chapman, Marlowe, &c. A copious analysis of these pieces has been given by Mr. Haslewood in No. V. of the *British Bibliographer*, from p. 488 to 503; but neither the genius nor the versification of Sabie merit much notice: his "Pan," however, contains some beautiful rhymed lines.

<i>Saker, Aug.</i>	<i>The Labirinth of Liberty.</i>	1579	
<i>Sampson, Thomas.</i>	<i>Fortune's Fashion, Pourtrayed in the troubles of the Ladie Elizabeth Gray, wife to Edward the Fourth.</i>	4to. 1613	*
<i>Sandford, James.</i>	<i>Certayne Poems dedicated to the queenes moste excellent majestie.</i>	8vo. 1576	
<i>Scoloker, Anthony.</i>	<i>Daiphantus, or the Passions of Love,</i>	4to. 1604	18. p. 532
<i>Scot, Gregory.</i>	<i>A Brieft Treatise agaynst certayne errors of the Romish Church.</i>	12mo. 1570	
<i>Scott, Thomas.</i>	<i>Four Paradoxes: of Arte, of Lawe, of Warre, of Service.</i>	Small 8vo. † 1602	**
<i>Scott, Thomas.</i>	<i>Phylomythie, or Philomythologie: wherein Outlandish Birds, Beasts, and Fishes are taught to speake true English plainly.</i>	‡ 1616	*
<i>Smith, Jud.</i>	<i>A Misticall Devise of the spirituall and godly love between Christ the spouse, and the Church or congregation. Firste made by the wise prince Salomon, and now newly set forth in Verse, etc.</i>	Small 8vo. 1575	**
<i>Smith, William.</i>	<i>Chloris, or the complaint of the passionate despised shepheard.</i>	4to. 1596	
<i>Soothern, John.</i>	<i>Pandora, the Musique of the Beautie of his Mistresse Diana.</i>	4to. § 1584	*****
<i>Stanyhurst, Richard.</i>	<i>The First Four Bookes of Virgil's Æneis, translated into English heroicall verse by Richard Stanyhurst: with other poeticall devises thereto annexed.</i>	4to. †† 1583	*****
<i>Storer, Thomas.</i>	<i>The Life and Death of Thomas Wolsey, cardinall, divided into three parts: his aspiring, triumph, and death.</i>	4to. 1599	*
<i>Stubbs, Philip.</i>	<i>A View of Vanitie, and Allarum to England, or retrait from sinne.</i>	8vo. 1582	*
<i>Stewart, James the First, King of England.</i>	<i>The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie.</i>	4to. Edin. †† 1584	*
	<i>His Majesties Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Houres.</i>	4to. Edin. §§ 1591	*
<i>Tarlton, Richard.</i>	<i>Toyes: in Verse.</i>	1576	
	<i>Tragicall Treatises, conteyninge sundrie discourses and pretie conceipts, bothe in prose and verse.</i>	1577	
	<i>Tarlton's Repentance, or his farewell to his frendes in his sickness, a little before his deathe.</i>	††† 1589	

† The "Four Paradoxes" occupy four portions, each consisting of 18 six-line stanzas, and the whole is terminated by three additional ones, entitled his "Resolution." The specimens of this poem adduced by Mr. Park in *Censura Literaria*, vol. iii. and iv, speak highly in its favour.

‡ An accurate account of this volume, which was republished in 1622 and 1640, may be found in *Censura Literaria*, vol. iii. p. 381.

§ A perfect copy of this miserable collection of poems, consisting of sonnets, elegies, odes, odellets, &c. was purchased, at a sale, by Mr. Triphook, for twelve guineas

†† An ample and interesting description of Stanyhurst, and his translation, will be found in *Censura Literaria*, vol. iv. p. 225, 354, the production of Mr. Haslewood. Nash has not exaggerated when, alluding to this poet, he says, "whose heroical poetry infired, I should say inspired, with an hexameter furye, recalled to life whatever hissed barbarism hath been buried this hundred years; and revived by his ragged quill such carterly varietie, as no hedge plowman in a countrie but would have held as the extremitie of clownerie: a patterne whereof I will propound to your judgment, as near as I can, being part of one of his descriptions of a tempest, which is thus:—

" Then did he make heaven's vault to rebound
With rounce robbles bobble,
Of ruffe raffe roaring,
With thicke thwacke thurly bouncing."—*Preface to Greene's Arcadia.*

††† The most interesting part of this volume, from the nature of its subject, is "Ane schort Treatise conteining some Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie," in which the regal critic observes, that "sindrie hes written of it in English," an assertion which would lead to the supposition that some of our earliest critics had perished; for Gascoigne's "Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of Verse or Rhyme," 1575, appears now to be the only piece of criticism on poetic composition which preceded James's "Essayes."

§§ The Poetical Exercises contain but two poems,—the "Furies," translated from Du Bartas, and "The Lepanto," an original piece. Several minor poems, introduced into his own works and those of others, some sonnets and a translation of the psalms, were written by James after his accession to the English throne.

†††† Of this far-famed comedian and jester, Fuller says, that "when Queen Elizabeth was serious (I dare not say sullen) and out of good humour, he could undumpis her at his pleasure. Her highest favourites would in some cases go to Tarlton before they would go to the Queen, and he was their usher to prepare their advantageous accession to her. In a word, he told the Queen more of her faults than most of her

<i>Taylor, John.</i>	Heaven's Blessing and Earth's Joy, etc. on the marriage of Frederick Count Palatine, and the Princess Elizabeth; including Epithalamia, etc.	1613	**
	The Nipping or Snipping of Abuses, or the Wool-gathering of Wit. †	1614	**
<i>Tofte, Roberte.</i>	Two Tales translated out of Ariosto, etc. With certaine other Italian stanzas and proverbes. 4to.	1597	*
<i>Laura.</i>	The toyes of a traveller; or the feast of fancie, divided into 3 parts. 4to.	1597	
<i>Orlando Inamorato.</i>	The three first bookes, etc. Done into English heroically verse. 4to.	1598	
	Alba, the month's minde of a melancholy lover. 8vo.	1598	
	Honours Academy, or the famous pastorall of the faire shepherdesse Julietta. Verse and prose. Folio.	1610	
	The Fruits of Jealousie. Contayning the disastrous Chance of two English Lovers, overthrowne through meere Conceit of Jealousie. 4to. ‡	1615	**
<i>Treego, William.</i>	A Daintie Nosegay of divers smelles, containing many pretie ditties to diverse effects.	1577	
<i>Tudor, Elizabeth, Queen of England.</i>	Two Little Anthemes, or things in meeter of her majestie. §	1578	*
<i>Turner, Richard.</i>	Nosce Te (Humors.)	1607	
<i>Tryne, Thomas.</i>	The whole xij Bookes of the Æneidos of Virgill. Whereof the first ix. and part of the tenth, were converted into English meeter by Thomas Phaër esquier, and the residue supplied, and the whole worke together newly set forth. by Thomas Twyne gentleman. 4to.	1573	*
<i>Tye, Christopher.</i>	A Notable Historie of Nastagio and Traversari, no less pitiefull than pleasaunt, translated out of Italian into English. 12mo.	1569	
<i>Underdowne, Thomas.</i>	Ovid his Invective against Ibis. 8vo.	1569	*
	The Excellent Historie of Theseus and Ariadne, etc. Written in English Meeter. 8vo.	1566	*
<i>Vallands, William.</i>	A Tale of Two Swannes, etc. 4to.	1590	
<i>Vennard, Richard.</i>	"The Miracle of Nature," and other poems. 4to.	1601	
<i>Verstegan, Richard.</i>	Odes: in imitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms. With sundry other poemmes and Ditties, tending to devotion and pietie. 8vo.	1601	*
<i>Warren, William.</i>	A Pleasant New Fancie, of a fondling's device, intituled and cald, The nurserie of names, etc. 4to.	1581	
<i>Webbe, William.</i>	The First and Second Eclogues of Virgil. In English hexameters, and printed in his "Discourse of English Poetrie."	1586	*
<i>Webster, William.</i>	The Moste Pleasant and Delightful Historie of Curan, a prince of Danske, and the sayre princesse Argentill, etc. 4to. ††		*

chaplains, and cured her melancholy better than all her physicians." Indeed, in the language of a contemporary,

"Of all the jesters in the lande
He bare the praise awaie."

Vide *Ritson Bibl.* p. 359.

† Of this voluminous scribbler, whose rhyming spirit, remarks Granger, did not evaporate with his youth, who held the pen much longer than he did the oar, and who was the poetaster of half a century. I have only been able to insert two of his earliest productions, the remainder being subsequent to 1616, and extending to 1653. He was thirty-two when Shakspeare died; and "the waterman," observes Mr. Chalmers, "must have often sculled Shakspeare, who is said to have lived on *The Bankside*."—*Apology*, p. 101.

‡ "The Fruits of Jealousie," a long poem in octave measure, may be found at the close of "The Blazon of Jealousie," translated from the Italian of Varchi, of which an account is given in *Censura Literaria*, vol. iv. p. 403.

§ Beside these anthems, which were licensed to her printer, Christ. Barker, Nov. 15, her Majesty wrote a variety of small pieces, some of which have been preserved by Hentzner, Puttenham, and Soothern, and reprinted by Percy, Ellis, and Ritson. The fourteenth Psalm also, and the Speech of the Chorus in the second Act of the *Hercules Cæteus* of Seneca, have been published by Mr. Park, the latter poem being a specimen of blank verse.—Vide Park's *Royal and Noble Authors*, vol. i. p. 102.

Of the execrable flattery which was systematically bestowed on this monarch, the following eulogium upon her poetry, is a curious instance. After enumerating the best poets of his age, Puttenham thus proceeds:—"But last in recitall and first in degree is the Queene our soveraigne Lady, whose learned, delicate, noble Muse, easily surmounteth all the rest that have written before her time or since, for sence, sweetnesse and subtiltie, be it Ode, Elegie, Epigram, or any other kinde of poeme, Heroick, Lyricke, wherein it shall please her Majestie to employ her penne, even by as much oddes as her owne excellent estate and degree exceedeth all the rest of her most humble vassalls,"—*The Arte of English Poesie*, reprint, p. 51.

†† This copy is without date, but a second edition was printed in 1617; it is a miserable paraphrase of Warner's exquisite episode.

- Weddenburn.* Ane Compendious Booke of Godly and Spirituall Songs, collectit out of sundrie partes of the Scripture, with sundrie of other Ballates changed out of Prophane Sanges, for avoyding of Sinne and Harlotrie. 12mo. Edin. † 1597 | *
- Weever, John.* A little Book of Epigrams. 8vo. 1599
- The Mirror of Martyrs, or the life and death of that thrice valiant capitaine and most godly martyre, Sir John Oldcastle knight, lord Cobham. 18mo. 1601
- Wenman, Thomas.* The Legend of Mary, Queen of Scots, with other Poems. ‡ 1601 |
- Wharton, John.* Wharton's Dreame: conteyninge an invective agaynst certaine abhominable caterpillars, etc. 4to. 1578
- Whetstone, George.* The Rocke of Regard: divided into foure parts. The first, the Castle of Delight, etc. The second, the Garden of Unthriftinesse, etc. The thirde, the Arbour of Virtue, etc.; and the fourth, the Orchard of Repentance, 4to. § 1576 | *
- A Report of the Vertues of the right valiant and worthy knight S. Francis, Lord Russell, 4to. †† 1585 | *
- Whitney, Geoffrey.* A Choice of Emblemes, and other devises. 4to. 1586 | *
- Fables or Epigrams. 4to. †† 1586
- Wilkinson, Edward.* Isahac's Inheritance; dew to over high and mightie Prince, James the sixt of Scotland, etc. 4to. 1603 | *
- Willet, Andrew.* Sacrorum Emblematum centura una, in Latin and English verse. 4to. §§
- Willymat, William.* A Princes Looking Glasse, or a Princes Direction, etc. 4to. 1603 * |
- Wyrley, William.* Lord Chandos. The glorious life and honourable death of Sir John Chandos, etc. 4to. 1592 | **
- Capitall de Buz. The honourable life and languishing death of Sir John de Gralhy Catitall de Buz. 4to. ††† 1592 | **
- Yates, James.* The Castell of Courtesie, whereunto is adjoyned The Holde of Humillitie; with the Chariot of Chastitie thereunto annexed. Also a Dialogue between Age and Youth; and other matters herein conteined. 4to. ††† 1582 | *
- Yong, Bartholomew.* Diana of George of Montemayer. Translated out of Spanish into English. Prose and Verse. Folio. §§§ 1598 * |
- Zouche, Richard.* The Dove, or Passages of Cosmography, by Richard Zouche, Civilian of New College, in Oxford. †††† 1613 |

Several articles in this table, it will be observed, are without any mark designating their merit in the scale, a defalcation which has occurred from our not having been able to procure either the works themselves, or even specimens of them, a circumstance not exciting wonder, if we consider the extreme rarity of the greater part of the pieces which form the catalogue.

† Of this Collection Lord Hailes published a specimen in 1765; in 1801, Mr. J.-Gr. Dalzell reprinted the whole, with the Scotch poems of the 16th century Edin. 2 vols. 12mo; and Mr. Irving has given some notices of the author in his Scotch poets, 2 vols. 8vo. 1804.

‡ Wenman's Legend and Poems have lately been printed by Mr. Fry, in an octavo volume, from a quarto manuscript of 52 leaves. The Legend appears to have been intended for insertion in the "Mirror for Magistrates."

§ See Censura Lit. vol. v. p. 1.

†† This poem of 90 seven-line stanzas, is annexed to Bindley's "Mirror of True Honour and Christian Nobility," &c. 1585. 4to.

‡‡ Of Whitney's Emblemes, which, being printed at Leyden, is a very rare book, a description will be found in Censura Lit. vol. v. p. 233.

§§ Willet's Emblems were written before 1598, as Meres alludes to them in his "Palladis Tamia."

††† These biographical poems were added to the author's "True use of Armorie," 1592, 4to. Of the first poem an extract is given in Censura Lit. vol. i. p. 149, 150.

‡‡‡ Acopy of these poems, apparently unique, is in the possession of Mr. Park, who has communicated a description of it in Censura Lit. vol. iii. p. 175.

§§§ This romance, which abounds with poetry, is of the pastoral species; it is written on the plan of Sidney's Arcadia, and, like it, exhibits many beautiful passages both in prose and verse: twenty-seven of its poetical effusions have been inserted in "England's Helicon," and several have been lately reprinted in "Restituta," No. VII. accompanied by some interesting remarks from the pen of Sir Egerton Brydges.

†††† For a specimen of this poem, which "is a concise geographical description of three-quarters of the world, Asia, Africa, and Europe, in the manner of Dionysius," and which Mr. Beloe believes to be unique, see his Anecdotes, vol. ii. p. 74.

Another result which may immediately strike the reader will be, that of one hundred and ninety-three poets included in this list, so few should have risen even one degree above mediocrity, and so many should have fallen below it; but it should be recollected that the nobler bards, amounting to forty, had been previously enumerated, and that poetic excellence is, at all times, of very rare attainment.

The most legitimate subject of admiration, indeed, arising from a review of these details, is the extraordinary fecundity of the Shakspearean era; that in the course of fifty-two years, and independent of any consideration of dramatic effort, or of the various contributors to collections of poetry, nearly two hundred and thirty-three bards in the miscellaneous department should have been produced: and these, not the writers of scattered or insulated verses, but the publishers of their own collected works.

A still more heightened conception of the fertility of the period will accrue from a survey of its numerous **POETICAL MISCELLANIES**, a species of publication which constitutes a remarkable feature of the age.

Before the reign of Elizabeth, only one production of the kind had made its appearance, namely, the Collection, called by Tottel "The poems of Uncertaine Auctors," and appended to his edition of Surrey and Wyatt in 1557. But, during the first year after the accession of our maiden queen, appeared the "**MIRROUR for MAGISTRATES**," a quarto volume containing nineteen legends or characters drawn from English history. The plan originated with Sackville, who, not finding leisure to write more than an Induction and the Legend of Henry Duke of Buckingham, transferred the completion of the work to Richard Baldwyne and George Ferrers, who were further assisted in its prosecution by Churchyard, Phayer, Skelton, Dolman, Seagers, and Cavyl. A second edition, of what may be termed Baldwyne's *Mirroure*, was printed in 1563, with the addition of eight legends; a third issued from the press, in 1571 and a fourth in 1575. With the exception of Sackville's two pieces, on which an eulogium has already been given, mediocrity may be said to characterise the productions of Baldwyne and his associates.

In the same year which produced the fourth edition of Baldwyne's Collection, a new series of Legends was published in 4to, by John Higgins, which, commencing at an earlier period than his predecessor's work, he entitled "The firste Part of the Mirour for Magistrates." This portion commences, after an Induction, with the legend of King Albanact, the youngest son of Brutus, and terminates with that of Lord Irenglas, "slayne about the yeere before Christ;" including seventeen histories, the sole composition of Higgins. It was reprinted, with little or no alteration, in 1578, and occasioned Baldwyne's prior publication to be called "The Last Part."

The year 1578, however, not only produced this second impression of Higgin's *Mirroure*, but witnessed a fifth and separate edition of Baldwyne's labours, with the addition of two legends, and an intermediate part written by Thomas Blener-Hasset, containing twelve stories, and entitled "The Seconde part of the Mirroure of Magistrates, conteining the falles of the infortunate Princes of this Lande: from the Conquest of Cæsar unto the commying of Duke William the Conquerer," 4to.

A much more complete edition of this very curious collection of poetic biography at length appeared in 1587, under the care of Higgins, who blending Baldwyne's peices with his own former publications, and adding greatly to both parts, produced a quarto volume consisting of seventy-three legends.

Enlarged and improved as this impression must necessarily be deemed, it was still further augmented, and, in fact, digested anew by Richard Niccols, who, in 1610, published his copy of the work with the following title: "A Mirroure for Magistrates, being a true Chronicle-history of the untimely falles of such unfortunate princes and men of note as have happened since the first entrance of Brute into this Iland untill this our age. Newly enlarged with a last part called a 'Winter Night's Vision,' being an addition of such Tragedies espe-

cially famous as are exempted, in the former Historie, with a poem annexed called (England's Eliza)."

Niccols's edition forms a thick quarto of eight hundred and seventy-five pages, including ninety legends, and embracing, with the exception of four pieces, all the parts previously published, in chronological order, and super-adding an induction and ten poems of his own composition. He has taken the liberty, however, of modernising and abbreviating some of the earliest stories, with the view of rendering the series more acceptable to his contemporaries.

Of the "Mirrour for Magistrates," the poetical merit must, of course, be various and discrepant. Sackville stands pre-eminent and apart, the author, indeed, of a poem, which, for strength and distinctness of imagery, is almost unrivalled. Next, but with many a length between, Niccols claims our attention for sweetness of versification, perspicuity of diction, and occasional flights of fancy. In his legend of Richard the Third, he is evidently indebted to Shakspeare, and his poem assumes, on that account, a higher imaginative tone. The other writers of this bulky collection are as much inferior to Niccols, as he is to Sackville. The best production of Higgins is his legend of Queen Cordelia; and from Baldwyne and Ferrers, a few stanzas, animated by the breath of poetry, might be quoted; but Blener-Hasset seldom, if ever, reaches mediocrity.

The popularity of this work, and its influence on our national poetry, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First, were very considerable. Even in its earliest and most unfinished state it had attracted the admiration of Sir Philip Sidney, who says, "I account the Mirrour of Magistrates, meetely furnished of beautiful partes;" and in its last and most perfect form, it seems to have been considered as a book necessary to the accomplished gentleman; for in Chapman's Comedy, entitled "May-Day," and printed in 1611, a character versed in the elegant literature of the time, is described as "One that has read Marcus, Aurelius, Gesta Romanorum, and the Mirrour of Magistrates." *

That this Collection contributed to accelerate the progress of dramatic poetry, and to familiarise the events of our history, there can be little doubt, if we reflect that previous to its appearance historical plays were scarcely known; that its pages present us with innumerable specimens of dramatic speeches, incidents, and characters, and that it has thrown into a metrical form the most interesting passages of the ancient chroniclers, a medium through which the best parts of those massive compilations soon descended to the lower orders of society.

The next work which calls for our attention is "The Paradyse of Daynty Devises," originally published in 1576 with the following title:—"The Paradyse of daynty devises, aptly furnished with sundry pithie and learned inventions: devised and written for the most part by M. Edwards, sometimes of her Majesties Chappel: the rest by sundry learned Gentlemen, both of honor, and worshippe: viz. S. Barnarde, E. O, L. Vaux, D. S, Jasper Heywood, F. K, M. Bewe, R. Hill, M. Yloop, with others. Imprinted at London, by Henry Disle, dwellyng in Paules Churchyard, at the South west doore of Saint Paules Church, and are there to be solde," 4to.

Though, until the late re-print by Sir Egerton Brydges, this miscellany had become extremely rare,† yet numerous editions of it were called for during the first thirty years of its existence. In 1577, and 1578, Disle again published it in quarto, and it is remarkable for being the only book of his printing which has reached the present age. The edition of 1578 differs, in some respects, from the preceding, and from all, in including a poem by George Whetstone, no where else discoverable.

A fourth edition, from the press of Disle, appeared in 1580, varying so greatly from the earlier copies, that it omits eighteen poems contained in the first impression, and substitutes eighteen others in their place.

* May-Day: a wittie comedie. Divers times acted at "The Blacke Fryers;" 4to. Act iii. fol. 39.

† A copy of this Miscellany, of the edition of 1580, sold at the Roxburghe Sale, for 55*l.* 13*s.*!

In 1585, the public attention was fixed on a fifth edition by Edward White, who also republished the work in 1596 and 1600 in 4to. The two latter impressions were printed by Edward Allde for White, and exhibit some variations from the copy of 1580, omitting four pieces in that edition, and adding seven new ones. Beside these, there was an edition, without date, printed by Allde for White, and constituting an eighth impression.

That a Collection which ran through so many editions in so short a period, must possess a considerable share of merit, will be a natural inference; nor will the readers of the Reprint lately published be disappointed in such an expectation. It is true that the "Paradise of Daintie Devises" contains no piece of such high poetic character as the "Induction" of Sackville; for its contributions are chiefly on subjects of an ethic and didactic cast; but it displays a vast variety of short compositions, on love, friendship, and adversity; on the consolations of a contented mind, on the instability of human pleasures, and on many of the minor morals and events of life. These are expressed, in many instances, with simplicity and vigour, and often with a flow of versification and perspicuity of diction, which, considering the age of their production, is truly remarkable. If no splendour of imagery or sublimity of sentiment arrest the attention, it cannot be denied that several of these poems make their way to the heart, by attractions resulting from a clear perception that the writers wrote from their own unadulterated feelings, from the instant pressure of what they suffered or enjoyed.

Of the contributors to this Miscellany, which, in its most perfect state, consists of one hundred and twenty-four poems, more than one half was communicated by six individuals; by Lord Vaux fourteen pieces; by Richard Edwardes fourteen; by William Hunnis twelve; by Francis Kinwelmarsh ten; by Jasper Heywood eight; and by the Earl of Oxford seven.

The compositions of Lord Vaux are uniformly of a moral and pensive cast, and breathe a spirit of religion and resignation often truly touching, and sometimes bordering on the sublime. Of this description more particularly are the poems entitled "Of the instabilitie of youth;" "Of a contented mind;" and on "Beying asked the occasion of his white head," from the last of which a few lines will afford a pleasing specimen of the pathetic tone and unaffected style of this noble bard:—

" These heeres of age are messingers,
Whiche bidd me fast, repent and praie :
Thei be of death the harbingers,
That doeth prepare and dresse the waie,
Wherefore I joye that you mai see,
Upon my head such heeres to bee.

Thei be the line that lead the length,
How farre my race was for to ronne :
Thei saie my yongth is fledde with strength,
And how old age is well begonne.
The whiche I feele, and you maie see,
Upon my head such lines to bee."

Of a character still higher for poetic power are the effusions of Richard Edwards, who excel alike in descriptive, ethic, and pathetic strains. Of the first, his two pieces called "May" and "I may not" are, with the exception of the third stanza of the latter poem, very striking instances; of the second, he has afforded us several proofs; and of the last, his lines on the maxim of Terence, "*Amantium iræ amoris redintegratio est*," form one of the most lovely exemplifications in the language. Of the opening stanza it is scarcely possible to resist giving a transcription:—

" In going to my naked bed, as one that would have slept,
I heard a wife syng to her child, that long before had wept :
She sighed sore and sang full sore, to bryng the babe to rest,
That would not rest but cried still in suckyng at her brest :
She was full wearie of her watche, and grieved with her child,
She rocked it and rated it, untill on her it smilde :
Then did she saie nowe have I founde the proverbe true to prove,
The fallyng out of faithfull friends renewing is of love." *

"The happiness of the illustration," remarks Sir Egerton Brydges, "the facility, elegance, and tenderness of the language, and the exquisite turn of the whole, are above commendation ;

* Reprint, p. 42.

and show to what occasional polish and refinement our literature even then had arrived. Yet has the treasure which this gem adorned, lain buried and inaccessible, except to a few curious collectors, for at least a century and an half."*

Edwards has a song of four stanzas "In commendation of Musick," of which the first has been quoted by Shakspeare in *Romeo and Juliet* (Act iv. sc. 5), affording a proof, if any were wanted, that the madrigals of Edwards were very popular in their day.

Of the poetry of William Hunnis the more remarkable features are a peculiar flow of versification, and a delicate turn upon the words, which approximate his songs in an extraordinary degree to the standard of the present age. By dividing his lines of sixteen syllables into two, this similarity becomes more apparent; for instance,—

"When first mine eyes did view and mark
Thy beauty fair for to behold,
And when mine eares gan first to hark
The pleasant words that thou me told;
I would as then I had been free
From ears to hear and eyes to see.

And when in mind I did consent
To follow thus my fancy's will,
And when my heart did first relent
To taste such bait myself to spill,

I would my heart had been as thine,
Or else thy heart as soft as mine. †

O flatterer false, thou traitor born,
What mischief more might thou devise,
Than thy dear friend to have in scorn,
And him to wound in sundry wise?
Which still a friend pretends to be,
And art not so by proof I see.
Fie, fie, upon such treachery."‡

From the ten contributions by Kinwelmarsh, three may be selected as pleasing, both from their sentiment and melody, viz. "On learning;" "All thinges are vain," which is a truly beautiful poem; and "The complaint of a Sinner." § Neither the productions of Heywood, nor of the Earl of Oxford, surmount mediocrity.

Of the remaining writers who assisted in forming this collection, M. Bewe has written five pieces; Arthur Bourcher, one; M. Candish, one; Thos. Churchyard, one; G. Gashe, one; Richard Hill, seven; Lodowick Lloyd, one; T. Marshall, two; Barnaby Rich, one; D. Sands, five; M. Thorn, two; Yloop, two, and there are five with the signature of "My lucke is losse." There are sixteen poems also with initials only subjoined, and seven anonymous contributions. Most of these consist of moral precepts versified, and, though little entitled to the appellation of poetry, from any display either of imagery or invention, are yet of high value as developing the progress both of literary and intellectual cultivation.

The popularity of Edward's Miscellany produced, two years afterward, another collection of a similar kind, under the title of "A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions. Garnished and decked with Divers Dayntie Devises, right delicate and delightfull, to recreate eche modest minde withall. First framed and fashioned in sundrie formes, by Divers Worthy Workemen of late dayes: and now joyned together and builded up: By T. P. Imprinted at London, for Richard Jones. 1578."

"Of this work, "one copy only," relates Mr. Parks (*Heliconia*, part I.) "is known to have survived the depredation of time. This was purchased by Dr. Farmer, with the choice poetical stores of Mr. Wynne, which had been formed in the seventeenth century by Mr. Narcisus Luttrell. At Dr. Farmer's book-sale this *unique* was procured by Mr. Malone; from whose communicative kindness a transcript was obtained, which furnished the present reprint. One hiatus, occasioned by the loss of a leaf, occurs at p. 102, which it will be hopeless to supply, unless some chance copy should be lurking in the corner of a musty chest, a family-library, or neglected lumber-closet; though, in consequence of the estimation in which all antiquated rarities are now held, even such hiding-places have become very assiduously explored.

By the Initials T. P. we are to understand Thomas Proctor, the editor of this

* Preface to his reprint, p. vi.

‡ Ibid. p. 65.

† Reprint, p. 57, 58.

§ Ibid. p. 14, 37, 87.

"Gorgious Gallery," and who has been noticed in the preceding table by on account of his "Pretie Pamphlets," which commence at p. 125 of Mr. Park's Reprint. His verses following this title are numerous, and in various metres, and indicate him to have been no mean observer of life and manners. If he display little of the fancy of the poet, he is not often deficient in moral weight of sentiment, and though not remarkable for either the melody or correctness of his versification, he may be considered as having passed the limits of mediocrity.

Of the other contributors our information is so scanty, that we can only mention Anthony Munday and Owen Royden, and this in consequence of the first having prefixed a copy of verses "In commendation of this Gallery," and the second a more elaborate poem, "To the curious company of Sycophants." It is probable that they were both coadjutors in the body of the work.

The "Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions" consists of seventy-four poems, and some, especially the "History of Pyramus and Thisbie," of considerable length. Too many of them are written in drawling couplets of fourteen syllables in a line, and with too flagrant a partiality for the meretricious garb of alliteration. * There appears to be also too little variety in the selection of topics, and some of the pieces are reprinted from "Tottel's Miscellany" and the "Paradise of Dayntie Devises." It must be pronounced, indeed, inferior to these its predecessors in the essential points of invention, harmony of metre, and versatility of style, though it seems to have shared with them no small portion of popular favour; for Nashe, in his life of Jacke Wilton, 1594, alluding to the Gardens of Rome, says, that "to tell you of their rare pleasures, their baths, their vineyards, their galleries, were to write a second part of the "Gorgious Galleries of Gallant Devices." †

In 1584 was published, in 16mo, "A Handeful of Pleasant Delites containing Sundrie new Sonets and delectable Histories in divers kindes of meeter. Newly devised to the newest tunes, that are now in use to be sung: everie sonet orderly pointed to his proper tune. With new additions of certain songs, to verie late devised notes, not commonly knowen, nor used heretofore. By Clement Robinson, and divers others. At London, printed by Richard Jhones: dwelling at the signe of the Rose and Crowne, neare Holdburne Bridge."

Only one copy of the printed original of this Miscellany, which is in the Marquis of Blandford's library, is supposed to be in existence. The editor, Clement Robinson, if all the pieces unappropriated to others, be of his composition, must be deemed worthy of high praise for numerous productions of great lyric sweetness in point of versification, and composed in a vein of much perspicuity with regard to diction. His associates, as far as we have any authority from the work itself, amount only to five; and these, with the exception of Leonard Gibson, who claims only one piece, consist of names unknown elsewhere in the annals of poetry. Two effusions are attributed to J. Tomson; two to Peter Picks; one to Thomas Richardson, and one to George Mannington. This last production, denominated "A sorrowfull Sonet," if we make allowance for a commencement too alliterative, possesses a large share of moral pathos, and unaffected simplicity. ‡

Thirty-two poems occupy the pages of this pleasing little volume, among which, at p. 23, is "A New Courtly Sonet of the Lady Greensleeves, to the new tune of Greensleeves," alluded to by Shakspeare in the Merry Wives of Windsor, (act ii. sc. 1), and which throws some curious light on the female dress of the period.

In point of interest, vivacity, and metrical harmony, this compilation has a decided superiority over the "Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions." It is, in a great measure, formed of ballads and songs adapted to well-known popular tunes, and, though its poets have been arbitrarily confined in the structure of their

* For a notable instance of this figure, we refer the reader to "The Lover in Bondage," at p. 50 of r. Park's reprint. Not Holofernes himself could more "affect the letter."

† Quoted by Mr. Park in the Advertisement to his reprint.

‡ Heliconia, Part II. p. 95.

verse by the pre-composed music, yet many of their lyrics have a smoothness and sweetness in the composition of their stanzas, which may even arrest the attention of a modern ear.

To the publication of Clement Robinson succeeded, in 1593, "The Phœnix Nest. Built up with the most rare and refined workes of Noblemen, worthy Knights, gallant Gentlemen, Masters of Arts, and brave Scholars. Full of variety excellent invention, and singular delight. Never before published. Set foorth by R. S. of the Inner Temple, Gentleman. Imprinted at London, by John Jackson, 4to."

The opening of Mr. Park's "Advertisement" to his Reprint of this Collection includes so much just, and elegantly expressed, criticism on our elder poetry, and on Shakspeare, that we seize with pleasure the opportunity of transferring it to our pages.

"Between the Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions," he remarks, "printed in 1578, and the present miscellany in 1593, an interval of only fifteen years, there will be traced no inconsiderable advance towards poetical elegance and sentimental refinement. Watson, Breton, Peele, and Lodge, contributed very materially to the grace, and melody, and strength, of our amatory, lyric, and satiric verse; while Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton enlarged the sphere of the allegoric, and historic, and descriptive Muse. But the magnitude of the works of the two latter poets, owing to the subjects they unhappily selected, has conduced to deaden that reputation which several of their minor effusions were calculated to keep alive. The very labours which might otherwise have extended their fame, have fatally contracted it. Their ponderous productions are incorporated indeed with the late general collections of British Poets, but where is the poetic amateur who peruses them? They resemble certain drugs in a family-dispensary, which, though seldom, if ever taken, still eke out the assemblage. From reading the fair specimens put forth by Mr. Ellis, many may be allured to covet the entire performances of our elder bards: but should these be obtained, they will probably be found (as Mr. Steevens said by the Shakspearian quartos) of little more worth than a squeezed orange. The flowers will appear to have been culled and distilled by the hand of judgment; and the essence of early poetry, like most other essences, will be discovered to lie in a narrow compass. 'Old poets in general,' says Mr. Southey, 'are only valuable because they are old.' It must be allowed that few poems of the Elizabethan æra are likely to afford complete satisfaction to a mere modern reader, from the fastidious delicacy of modern taste. Some antiquated alloy, either from incongruous metaphor or infelicitous expression, will commonly jar upon his mind or ear. The backward footstep of Time will be audible, if not visible. Yet the songs of our unrivalled Shakspeare combine an almost uniform exception to this remark. They are exquisite in thought, feeling, language, and modulation. They blend simplicity with beauty, sentiment with passion, picture with poesy. They unite symmetry of form with consistency of ornament, truth of nature with perfection of art, and must ever furnish models for lyric composition. As a sonnet-writer Shakspeare was not superior to some of his contemporaries: he was certainly inferior to himself. In lighter numbers and in blank verse, peculiar and transcendent was his excellence. His songs never have been surpassed, his dramas never are likely to be." *

Of the editor of the Phœnix Nest, intended by the initials R. S., no certain information has been obtained. The work has been attributed to Richard Stanyhurst, Richard Stapleton, and to Robert Southwell, by Coxeter, by Warton, and by Waldron; but their claims, founded merely on conjecture, are entitled to little confidence. It is perhaps more interesting to know, that the chief contributors to this miscellany were among the best lyric poets of their age, that Thomas Watson, Nicholas Breton, and, above all, Thomas Lodge, assisted the unknown editor. Not less than sixteen pieces have the initials of this last bard, and many of them are among the most beautiful productions of his genius. Beside these, George Peele, William Smith, Matthew Roydon, Sir William Herbert, the Earl of Oxford, and several others, aided in completing this elegant volume.

The "Phœnix Nest," which comprehends not less than seventy-nine poems, is certainly one of the most attractive of the Elizabethan miscellanies, whether

* Heliconia, Part III. Advertisement.

we regard its style, its versification, or its choice of subject, and will probably be deemed inferior only to "England's Helicon," which, indeed, owes a few of its beauties to this work.

Of the valuable Collection thus mentioned, the first edition made its appearance in 1600, with the following title-page: "England's Helicon. At London. Printed by J. R. for John Flasket, and are to be sold in Paules Church-yard, at the sign of the Beare." 4to.

The second edition was published in 1614, and entitled, "England's Helicon, or the Muses Harmony. London: Printed for Richard More; and are to be sould at his shop in S. Dunstanes Church-yard." 8vo.

"England's Helicon," which, in its first impression, contained one hundred and fifty poems, and in its second one hundred and fifty-nine, has the felicity of enrolling among its contributors all the principal poets of its era. These, enumerated alphabetically, are as follow:—Richard Barnefield has two pieces; Thomas Bastard, one; Edmund Bolton, five; Nicholas Breton, eight; Christopher Brooke, one; William Browne, one; Henry Constable, four; John Davis, one; Michael Drayton, five; Sir Edward Dyer, six; John Ford, one; Robert Greene, seven; Fulke Grevile, two; John Gough, one; Howard, Earle of Surrie, two; Howell, one; William Hunnis, two; Thomas Lodge, ten; Jervis Markham, two; Christopher Marlowe, one; Earle of Oxenford, one; George Peele, three; Sir Walter Raleigh, fourteen; William Shakspeare, two; S^r Philip Sidney, fourteen; William Smith, one; Edmund Spenser, three; Shepherd Tonie, seven; Thomas Watson, five; John Wootton, two, and Bartholomew Yong, twenty-five. Of anonymous contributions there are sixteen.

Amid this galaxy of bards we cannot fail to distinguish for their decided superiority, the productions of Breton, Greene, Lodge, Marlowe, and Raleigh, which might confer celebrity on any selection. The principal feature, indeed, of England's Helicon is its pastoral beauty, and in this department how few have surpassed, or even equalled, the exquisite strains of Lodge or Marlowe!

"It cannot be idle or useless," remarks Str Egerton Brydges, "to study this early Collection of Pastoral compositions. Here is the fountain of that diction, which has since been employed and expanded in the description of rural scenery. Here are the openings of those reflections on the imagery of nature, in which subsequent poets have so much dealt. They show us to what occasional excellence, both in turn of thought and polish of language, the literature of Queen Elizabeth had arrived; and how little the artificial and incumbered prose of mere scholars of that time exhibits a just specimen of either the sentiment or phrase of the court or people! In the best of these productions, even the accentuation and rhythm scarce differs from that of our days. Lodge and Breton in particular, who are characterised by their simplicity, are striking proofs of this!—

"To such as could enjoy the rough and far-fetched subtlety of metaphysical verses, this Collection must have appeared inexpressibly insipid and contemptible. To those whose business it was to draw similitudes from the most remote recesses of abstruse learning, how childish must seem the delineation of flowers that were open to every eye, and images which found a mirror in every bosom!!

"But, O, how dull is the intricate path of the philosopher, how uninteresting is all the laboured ingenuity of the artist, compared with the simple and touching pleasures which are alike open to the peasant, as to the scholar, the noble, or the monarch! It is in the gift of exquisite senses, and not in the adventitious circumstances of birth and fortune, that one human being excels another!

"The common air, the sun, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise."

"We are delighted to see reflected the same feelings, the same pleasures from the breasts of our ancestors. We hear the voices of those bearded chiefs, whose portraits adorn the pannels of our halls and galleries, still bearing witness to the same natural and eternal truths: still inveighing against the pomp, the fickleness, and the treachery of courts; and uttering the songs of the shepherd and the woodman, in language that defies the changes of time, and speaks to all ages the touching effusions of the heart.

"If some little additional prejudice in favour of these compositions be given by the association in our ideas of their antiquity, if we connect some reverence, and some increased force, with

expressions which were in favourite use with those who for two centuries have slept in the grave, the profound moral philosopher will neither blame nor regret this effect. It is among the most generous and most ornamental, if not among the most useful habits of the mind!

"Such are among the claims of this collection to notice. But the seal that has been hitherto put upon this treasure; the deep oblivion in which the major parts of its contents have for ages been buried, ought to excite curiosity, and impart a generous delight at its revival. Who is there so cold as to be moved with no enthusiasm at drawing the mantle from the figure of Time? For my part, I confess how often I have watched the gradual development with eager and breathless expectation; and gazed upon the reviving features till my warm fancy gave them a glow and a beauty, which perhaps the reality never in its happiest moments possessed."*

That very nearly two hundred years should have elapsed between the second and third editions of this miscellany is a striking proof of the neglect to which even the best of our ancient poetry has been hitherto subjected. The rapidly increasing taste of the present age, however, for the reliques of long-departed genius, cannot fail of precluding in future any return of such undeserved obscurity.

In 1600 the industry of Robert Allot presented the public with a large collection of extracts from the most popular poets of his time, under the title of "*England's Parnassus: or the choysest flowers of our moderne poets, with their poeticall comparisons. Descriptions of Bewties, Personages, Castles, Pallaces, Mountaines, Groves, Seas, Springs, Rivers, etc. Whereunto are annexed other various discourses, both pleasant and profitable.*" Small 8vo. pp. 510.

Had the editor of this curious volume, beside citing the names of his authors, added the titles of the works from which he culled his specimens, an infinity of trouble would have been saved to subsequent research; yet the deficiency has served in a peculiar manner, to mark the successful progress of modern bibliography. When Oldys wrote his Preface to Hayward's *British Muse*, which was first published in 1738, he complains grievously of this omission, observing that most of Allot's poets "were now so obsolete, that not knowing what they wrote, we can have no recourse to their works, if still extant."† Since this sentence was written, such has been the industry of our literary antiquaries, that almost every poem which Allot laid under contribution in forming his volume, has been ascertained, and rendered accessible to the curious enquirer; and so far from the writers being obsolete, after nearly eighty years have been added to their antiquity, we may venture to affirm that, excepting about half-a-dozen, they are as familiar to us as the poets of the present reign. It is but just, however, to acknowledge that a considerable portion of this intimacy may be ascribed to Allot's book, which, by its numerous passages from bards rendered scarce by neglect, has stimulated the bibliographical enthusiasm of the last twenty years to achieve their detection. An enumeration of the contributors to *England's Parnassus*, will serve to illustrate and confirm these remarks:—Thomas Achelly, Thomas Bastard, George Chapman, Thomas Churchyard, Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, John Davies, Thomas Dekkar, Michael Drayton, Edmund Fairfax, Charles Fitzgeffrey, Abraham Fraunce, George Gascoigne, Edward Gilpin, Robert Greene, Sir John Harrington, John Higgins, Thomas Hudson, James King of Scots, Benjamin Jonson, Thomas Kyd, Thomas Lodge, Gervase Markham, Christopher Marlowe, John Marston, Christopher Middleton, Thomas Nash, Earl of Oxford, George Peele, Matthew Roydon Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, William Shakspeare, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Storer, Earl of Surrey, Sir Philip Sidney, Joshua Sylvester, George Turberville, William Warner, Thomas Watson, John Weever, William Weever, and Sir Thomas Wyatt.

Though Oldys has severely blamed the judgment of the editor in his selection of authors and extracts, yet a much more consummate critic, the highly-gifted

* *England's Helicon*, reprint of 1812, Introduction, p. xx, xxi, xxii.

† Preface, p. 8, 9. This Collection of Hayward's had three different titles; the last dated 1741. The second edition is called "*The Quintessence of English Poetry.*"

Warton, considers him as having exhibited taste in his choice, and it must be acknowledged that the volume has preserved many exquisite passages from poets who, but for this selection, had probably been irrecoverably merged in oblivion.

In the same year with England's Parnassus came forth another compilation, to which its editor, John Bodenham, gave the following title: "Bel-vedere, or the Garden of the Muses. Imprinted at London, by F. K. for Hugh Astley, dwelling at Saint Magnus Corner. 1600. Small 8vo. p. 236.

This collection, which underwent a second impression in 1510, with the omission of its first appellative, "Belvedere," though it contain a vast number of quotations, is, on two accounts, inferior to the "Parnassus." In the first place, no author's names are annexed to the extracts, and, in the second, a much greater defect has arisen from the editor's determination to confine his specimens to one or two lines at most, a brevity which almost annihilates the interest of the work. To obviate, however, in some degree, the inconveniences arising from the first of these plans, he has recourse, in his præmium, to the following detail, which, as it gives a very curious narrative of the construction of the book, will have its due value with the reader:

"Now that every one may be fully satisfied concerning this Garden, that no man doth assume to him-selfe the praise thereof, or can arrogate to his owne deserving those things, which have been derived from so many rare and ingenious spirits; I have set down both how, whence, and where, these flowres had their first springing, till thus they were drawne together into the Muses Garden; that every ground may challenge his owne, each plant his particular, and no one be injured in the justice of his merit.

"First, out of many excellent speeches, spoken to her Majestie, at tiltings, triumphes, maskes, and shewes, and devises perfourmed in prograce: as also out of divers choise ditties sung so her; and some especially, proceeding from her owne most sacred selfe! Here are great store of them digested into their meete places, according as the method of the worke plainly delivereth. Likewise out of private poems, sonnets, ditties, and other wittie conceits, given to her honourable Ladies and vertuous Maids of Honour; according as they could be obtained by sight, or favour of copying, a number of most wittie and singular sentences. Secondly, looke what workes of poetrie have been put to the world's eye, by that learned and right royall king and poet, James King of Scotland; no one sentence of worth hath escaped, but are likewise here reduced into their right roome and place. Next, out of sundrie things extant, and many in private, done by these right honourable persons following: Thomas (Henry), Earl of Surrey, The Lorde Marquesse of Winchester, Mary Countess of Pembroke, and Sir Philip Sidney.

"From poems and workes of these noble personages extant: Edward, Earle of Oxenford; Ferdinando, Earle of Derby; Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Edward Dyer, Fulke Grevile, Esq, and Sir John Harrington.

"From divers essayes of their poetrie; some extant among other honourable personages writings, some from private labours and translations: Edmund Spenser, Henry Constable, Esq, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Lodge, Doctor of Physicke; Thomas Watson, Michaell Drayton, John Davies, Thomas Hudson, Henrie Locke, Esq., John Marstone, Chr. Marlowe, Benjn. Johnson, William Shakspeare, Thomas Churchyard, Esq., Tho. Nash, Tho. Kidde, Geo. Peele, Robert Greene, Josuah Sylvester, Nicolas Breton, Gervase Markham, Thomas Storer, Robert Wilmot, Chr. Middelton, and Richard Barnefield.

"These being moderne and extant poets, that have lived together, from many of their extant workes, and some kept in private: Thomas Norton, Esq., George Gascoigne, Esq., Frauncis Hindlemarsh, Esq., Thomas Atchelow, and George Whetstones.

"These being deceased, have left divers extant labours, and many more held back from publishing, which for the most part have been perused, and their due right here given them in the Muses Garden.

"Besides, what excellent sentences have been in any presented Tragedie, Historie, Pastoral, or Comedie, they have been likewise gathered, and are here inserted in their proper places."*

It will be perceived that eleven poets are here enumerated, who had no share in England's Parnassus; and it may be worth while to remark, that among the

* The curious Preface, from which we have given this long extract, is only to be found in the first edition of the Belvedere; its omission in the second is a singular defect, as it certainly forms the most interesting part of the impression of 1600.

verses prefixed in praise of the book, are some lines by R. Hat'way, whom Mr. Malone conjectures to have been the kinsman of Ann Hathaway, the wife of our immortal bard.

A small contribution of pieces by a few of the chief poets of the age, was in 1601 annexed to a production by Robert Chester, entitled, "Love's Martyr, or Rosalin's Complaint, allegorically shadowing the Truth of Love in the constant fate of the Phœnix and Turtle. A poem, enterlaced with much varietie and raritie; now first translated out of the venerable Italian Torquato Cæliano, by Robert Chester. With the true legend of famous King Arthur, the last of the nine worthies; being the first Essay of a new British poet: collected out of authentically records. To these are added some new compositions of several modern writers; whose names are subscribed to their severall workes; upon the first subject; viz. the Phœnix and Turtle."

These new compositions have the following second title immediately preceding them: "Hereafter follow diverse poetical essaies on the former subject; viz. the Turtle and Phœnix. Done by the best and chiefest of our modern writers, with their names subscribed to their particular workes. Never before extant. And now first consecrated by them all generally to the love and merit of the truly noble Knight, Sir John Salisburie."

The only known copy of this collection was in Major Pierson's possession, and it is solely from Mr. Malone, to whom we are indebted for the above titles, that we learn the names of the principal contributors; these are Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Marston, and Chapman. Shakspeare's contribution forms the twentieth poem in "The passionate Pilgrim," commencing

"Let the bird of loudest lay," &c.

A miscellany upon a more extensive scale than the preceding, and of great value for the taste exhibited in its selection, succeeded in 1602, under the appellation of "A Poetical Rapsodie; containing diverse Sonnets, Odes, Elegies, Madrigals, Epigrams, Pastorals, Eglogues, with other Poems, both in Rime and Measured Verse. For varietie and pleasure, the like never yet published. London. 12mo."

The editor and principal contributor was Francis Davison, a poet of no mean talents, and son of that Secretary of State, who experienced in so remarkable a degree the duplicity of Elizabeth, in relation to Mary Queen of Scots. In an Address to the Reader, he thus accounts for the form which the volume assumes:—

"Being induced by some private reasons, and by the instant entreaty of speciall friends, to suffer some of my worthlesse poems to be published, I desired to make some written by my deere friends *Anonymoi*, and my deerer *Brother*, to beare them company: both, without their consent; the latter being in the low-country warres, and the rest utterly ignorant thereof. My friends names I concealed; mine owne and my brother's I willed the printer to suppress, as well as I had concealed the other, which he having put in without my privity, we must now undergo a sharper censure perhaps than our namelesse workes should have done; and I especially. For if their poems be liked, the praise is due to their invention; if disliked, the blame both by them and all men will be derived upon me, for publishing that which they meant to suppress."

He then enters upon a defence of poetry, experience proving, he remarks, "by examples of many, both dead and living, that divers delighted and excelling herein, being princes or statesmen, have governed and counselled as wisely; being souldiers, have commanded armies as fortunately; being lawyers, have pleaded as judicially and eloquently; being divines, have written and taught as profoundly; and being of any other profession, have discharged it as sufficiently, as any other men whatsoever;" and concludes by alleging, as an excuse "for these poems in particular, that those under the name of *Anonymos* were written (as appeareth by divers things to Sir Philip Sidney living, and of him dead) almost twenty years since, when poetry was farre from that perfection to which it hath now attained: that my brother is by profession a souldier, and was not eighteen years old when he writ these toys: that mine owne were made most of them sixe or seven yeares since, at idle times as I journeyed up and downe during my travails."

The division of the "Rapsodie" more peculiarly occupied by these kindred bards, is that including "Sonnets, Odes, Elegies, Madrigals, and Epigrams, by Francis and Walter Davison, brethren;" and they were assisted in that, and the residue of the work, by Spenser, Sidney, Sir John Davis, Mary Countess of Pembroke, Thomas Campion, Thomas Watson, Charles Best, Thomas Spelman, and by others, whose initials are supposed to indicate Henry Constable, Walter Raleigh, Henry Wotton, Robert Greene, Andrew Willet, and Joshua Sylvester.*

The "Poetical Rapsodie" is dedicated by Davison in a sonnet, "To the most noble, honorable, and worthy Lord William Earl of Pembroke, Lord Herbert of Cardiffe, Marmion, and St. Quintine," and was successively republished with augmentations in 1608, 1611, and 1621. It may be said to present us, not only with a felicitous choice of topics, but it claims the merit of having preserved several valuable poems not elsewhere to be discovered, and which, owing to the rarity of the book, although four times subjected to the press, have not, until lately, attracted the notice that is due to them.

Independent of the ten miscellanies which we have now enumerated, an immense multitude of *Airs, Madrigals, and Songs*, set to music, and printed in *Parts*, were published during the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, and during the reign of James the First. These Collections contain a variety of lyric poems not elsewhere to be met with, and which were either written expressly for the Composers, or selected by the latter from manuscripts, or rare and insulated printed copies. Foremost among these Professors of Music, who thus indirectly contributed to enrich the stores of English Poetry, stands William Byrd. This celebrated composer's first printed work in English was licensed in 1587, and has the following title:—"Tenor. Psalmes, Sonets, and Songs of sadnes and pietie, made into musicke of five parts: whereof, some of them going a broad among divers, in untrue coppies, are heere truely corrected, and the other being Songs very rare and newly composed, are heere published, for the recreation of all such as delight in Musicke. By William Byrd, one of the Gent. of the Queene's Maies-ties Royall Chappell." 4to.

The volume is dedicated to Sir Christopher Hatton; and he tells his reader, in an epistle subscribed the most assured friend to all that love or learne musicke, William Byrd,—“heere is offered unto thy courteous acceptation, musicke of sundrie sorts, and to content divers humors. If thou be disposed to pray, heere are psalmes. If to bee merrie, here are sonets. If to lament for thy sins, heere are songs of sadnesse and pietie. If thou delight in musicke of great compasse, here are divers songs, which being originally made for instruments to express the harmony, and one voice to pronounce the dittie, are now framed in all parts for voyces to sing the same. If thou desire songs of smal compasse and fit for the reach of most voyces, heere are most in number of that sort.”

Next to Byrd, whose publications of this kind are numerous, we may mention Thomas Morley, no less remarkable for his skill in music, and for his fertility in the production of madrigals, ballets, and canzonets. How fashionable and universal had become the practice of singing these compositions at every party of amusement, may be drawn from one of the elementary works of this writer:—"Being at a banquet," he relates, "supper being ended, and music books brought to table, the mistress of the house, according to custom, presented me with a part, earnestly intreating me to sing; when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder, yea, some whispered to others demanding how I was brought up."†

Of the various collections of lyric poetry adapted to music and published by Morley, who died about the period of the accession of James the First, we shall notice two; one as indicative of the manners of the age, and the other of the

* See *Censura Literaria*, vol. i. p. 229.

† Vide Morley's *Plaine and easie Introduction to Practical Musick*

estimation in which the science was held by our composer, who seems, on this occasion, to have partaken the enthusiasm of Shakspeare; for in a dedication "To the Worshipfull Sir Gervis Clifton, Knight," prefixed to "Madrigals to five voyces. Selected out of the best approved Italian authors. By Thomas Morley, Gentleman of his Maiesties Royall Chapell, 1598," he tells his worthy patron, "I ever held this sentence of the poet, as a canon of my creede; 'That whom God loveth not, they love not Musique.' For as the art of Musique is one of the most Heavenly gifts, so the very love of Musique (without art) is one of the best engrafted testimonies of Heavens love towards us."

In 1601, Morley published in quarto, "Cantus Madrigales. The triumphes of Oriana, to 5 and 6 voices: composed by divers severall aucthors,"—a collection remarkable for its object, as it consisted of twenty-five songs, composed by twenty-four several musicians, for the express purpose of commemorating the beauty and virginity of Elizabeth, under the appellation of Oriana, and who was now in the sixty-eighth year of her age, one among innumerable proofs of the extreme vanity of this singular woman.

That a great portion of these musical miscellanies consisted of translations from the Italian, is evident from the publications of Byrd and Morley, and from the "Musica Transalpina" of Nicholas Yonge, printed in two parts, in the year 1588 and 1597, where, however, equal industry appears to have been exerted in collecting English songs; the dedication, indeed, points out very distinctly the sources whence these popular works were derived. "I endeavoured," says Yonge, "to get into my hands all such English songes as were praise worthie, and amongst others I had the hap to find in the hands of some of my good friends certain Italian Madrigales translated most of them five years ago by a gentleman for his private delight." The two parts of Musica Transalpina contain eighty-one songs.

It seems probable, indeed, from Orlando Gibbons's dedication of his "First set of Madrigals and Mottets" to Sir Christopher Hatton, dated 1612, that the courtiers of that period sometimes employed themselves in writing lyrics for their domestic Lutenists; for Orlando tells his lord,—"They were most of them composed in your own house, and do therefore properly belong unto you as lord of the soil; the language they speak you provided them; I only furnished them with tongues to utter the same." It may be, however, that Sir Christopher was only a selector of poetry for the lyre of Gibbons.

To enumerate the multitude of music-stricken individuals, who, during this period, were occupied in procuring and collecting lyric poetry for professional purposes, would fill a volume. Among the most indefatigable, may be mentioned John Wilbye, Thomas Weelkes, John Dowland and Robert Jones; "The Musicall Dream," 1609, and "The Muse's Gardin of Delights," 1610, by the last of these gentlemen, were held in great esteem.

We cannot close this subject, indeed, without acknowledging our obligations to this numerous class for the preservation of many most beautiful specimens of lyric poetry, which, it is highly probable, without their care and accompaniments, would either not have existed, or would have perished prematurely.*

As a further elucidation of the Poetical Literature of this period, and with the view of condensing its retrospect, by an arrangement under general heads, it may prove satisfactory, if we briefly throw into classes the names of those poets who may be considered as having given ornament or extension to their art. The following divisions, it is expected, will include all that, in this place, it can now be necessary to notice.

* For specimens of these interesting collections, I refer my reader to *Censura Literaria*, vol. ix. p. 1. et seq.; vol. x. p. 179, 294; and to the *British Bibliographer*, No. IV. p. 343; No. V. p. 563; No. VI. p. 59; No. IX. p. 427; No. XI. p. 652; No. XII. p. 48; and No. XV. p. 386.

<i>Epic Poetry.</i>	<i>Historic.</i>	<i>Lyric.</i>	<i>Didactic.</i>	<i>Satiric.</i>	<i>Sonnet.</i>	<i>Pastoral.</i>	<i>Translators.</i>
Spenser.	Sackville. Higgins. Niccols. Warner. Daniel. Drayton. Shakspeare. Marlowe. Fitzgeffrey. Storer. Willobie. Beaumont.	Gascoigne. Greene. Raleigh. Breton. Lodge. Shakspeare. Jonson. Wotton. Wither.	Tusser. Davies Sir J. Davors. Fletcher G.	Lodge. Hall. Marston. Donne. Wither.	Spenser. Sidney. Constable. Watson. Shakspeare. Daniel. Drayton. Barnes. Barnefield. Smith. Stirling. Drummond.	Spenser. Chalkhill. Marlowe. Drayton. Fairefax. Brown.	Chapman. Harrington. Fairfax. Sylvester. Golding.

We have thus, in as short a compass as the nature of the subject would admit, given, we trust, a more accurate view of the Shakspearean era, as it existed independent of the Drama, than has hitherto been attempted.

That Shakspeare was an assiduous reader of English Poetry ; that he studied with peculiar interest and attention his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, there is abundant reason to conclude from a careful perusal of his volume of miscellaneous poetry, which is modelled on a strict adherence to the taste which prevailed at the opening of his career. The collection, indeed, may, with no impropriety, be classed under the two divisions of Historic and Lyric poetry ; the former concluding “Venus and Adonis,” and the “Rape of Lucrece,” and the latter the “Sonets,” the “Passionate Pilgrim,” and the “Lover’s Complaint.”

The great models of Historic poetry, during the prior portion of Shakspeare’s life, were the “Mirrour for Magistrates” and “Warner’s Albion’s England ;” but for the mythological story of Venus and Adonis, though deviating in several important circumstances from its prototype, we are probably indebted to Golding’s Ovid ; and for the Rape of Lucrece and the structure of the stanza in which it is composed, to the reputation and the metre of the “Rosamond” of Daniel, printed in 1592. For the Sonnets, he had numerous examples in the productions of Spenser, Sidney, Watson, and Constable ; and, through the wide field of amatory lyric composition, excellence of almost every kind, in the form of ode, madrigal, and song, might be traced in the varied effusions of Gascoigne, Greene and Raleigh, Breton and Lodge.

How far our great bard exceeded, or fell beneath, the models which he possessed ; in what degree he was independent of their influence, and to what portion of estimation his miscellaneous poetry is justly entitled, will be the subjects of the next chapter, in which we shall venture to assign to these efforts of his early days a higher rank in the scale of excellence than it has hitherto been their fate to obtain.

CHAPTER V.

Dedications of Shakspeare’s Venus and Adonis, and Rape of Lucrece, to the Earl of Southampton
—Biographical Sketch of the Earl—Critique on the Poems of Shakspeare.

SHAKSPEARE’S dedication of his “Venus and Adonis” to the Earl of Southampton in 1593 ; the accomplishments, the liberality, and the virtues of this amiable nobleman, and the substantial patronage which, according to tradition, he bestowed upon our poet, together claim for him, in this place, a more than cursory notice as to life and character.

Thomas Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, and Baron of Titchfield, was born on the sixth of October, 1573. His grandfather had been created an Earl in the reign of Henry the Eighth; and his father, who married Mary, the daughter of Anthony, first Viscount of Montague, was a strenuous supporter of the rights of Mary Queen of Scots. Just previous to the completion of his eighth year, he suffered an irreparable loss by the death of his father, on the 4th of October, 1581. His mother, however, appears to have been by no means negligent of his education; for he was early sent to Cambridge, being matriculated there when only twelve years old, on the 11th of December, 1585. He was admitted of St. John's College, where, on the 6th of June, 1589, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and, after a residence of nearly five years in the University, he finally left it for Town, to complete his course of studies at Gray's Inn, of which place, in June, 1590, he had entered himself a member.

The circumstances which, so shortly after Lord Southampton's arrival in London, induced Shakspeare to select him as his patron, may, with an assurance almost amounting to certainty, be ascribed to the following event. Not long after the death of her husband, Lady Southampton married Sir Thomas Heneage, treasurer of the chamber, an office which necessarily led him into connection with actors and dramatic writers. Of this intercourse Lord Southampton, at the age of seventeen, was very willing to avail himself, and his subsequent history evinces, that, throughout life, he retained a passionate attachment to dramatic exhibitions. No stronger proof, indeed, can be given of his love for the theatre, than what an anecdote related by Rowland Whyte affords us, who, in a letter to Sir Robert Sydney, dated October 11th, 1599, tells his correspondent, that "my Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland come not to the Court (at Nonesuch). The one doth but very seldome. They pass away the tyme in London merely in going to plaies every day."

To a young nobleman thus inclined, imbued with a keen relish for dramatic poetry, who was ardent in his thirst for fame, and liberal in the encouragement of genius, it was natural for our poet to look not only with hope and expectation, but with enthusiastic regard. To Lord Southampton, therefore, though only nineteen years old, Shakspeare, in his twenty-ninth year,* dedicated his *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heire of his invention."

The language of his dedication, however, indicates some degree of apprehension as to the nature of its reception, and consequently proves that our author was not at this period assured of His Lordship's support; for it commences thus:—"Right Honorable, I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolisht lines to your Lordship;" and he adds in the opening of the next clause, "onely if your Honor seeme but pleased, I account myselfe highly praised." These timidities appear to have vanished in a very short period: for our author's dedication to the same nobleman of his *Rape of Lucrece*, which was entered on the Stationers' Books on May 9th, 1594, and published almost immediately afterwards, speaks a very different language, and indicates very plainly that Shakspeare had already experienced the beneficial effects of His Lordship's patronage. Gratitude and confidence, indeed, cannot express themselves in clearer terms than may be found in the diction of this address:—"The love I dedicate to Your Lordship," says the bard, "is without end.—The warrant I have of your Honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to doe is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duety would shew greater; meane time, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship." Words more declaratory of obligation it would not be easy to select, and we shall be justified, therefore, in inferring, that Lord Southampton had conferred upon Shakspeare,

* *Venus and Adonis* was entered on the Stationers' Books, by Richard Field, April 18, 1593, six days before its author completed the twenty-ninth year of his age.

in consequence of his dedication to him of *Venus and Adonis*, some marked proof of his kindness and protection.

Tradition has recorded, among other instances of this nobleman's pecuniary bounty, that he, at one time, gave Shakspeare a thousand pounds, in order to complete a purchase, a sum which in these days would be equal in value to more than five times its original amount. This may be, and probably is, an exaggeration; but that it has been founded on the well-known liberality of Lord Southampton to Shakspeare; on a certain knowledge that donations had passed from the peer to the poet, there can be little doubt. It had become the custom of the age to reward dedication by pecuniary bounty, and that Lord Southampton was diffusively and peculiarly generous in this mode of remuneration, we have the express testimony of Florio, who, dedicating his "*World of Words*" to this nobleman in 1598, says:—"In truth, I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all; yea, of more than I know, or can to your bounteous lordship, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years; to whom I owe and vowe the years I have to live. But, as to me, and many more, the glorious and gracious sunshine of your honour hath infused light and life." Here, if we except the direct confession relative to "pay," the language is similar to, and not more emphatically expressive of gratitude than was Shakspeare's; and that, under the phrase "many more," Florio meant to include our poet, we may, without scruple, infer. To an actor, to a rising dramatic writer, to one who had placed the first fruits of his genius under his protection, and who was still contending with the difficulties incident to his situation, the taste, the generosity, and the feeling of Lord Southampton would naturally be attracted; and the donation which, in all probability, followed the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, we have reason, from the voice of tradition, to conclude, was succeeded by many, and still more important, proofs of His Lordship's favour.

In 1597, when Lord Essex was appointed General of the forces destined to act against the Azores, Southampton, at the age of twenty-four, gallantly came forward as a volunteer, on board the *Garland*, one of Her Majesty's best ships,—an offer which was soon followed by a commission from Essex to command her. An opportunity speedily occurred for the display of his courage; in an engagement with the Spanish fleet, he pursued and sunk one of the enemy's largest men of war, and was wounded in the arm during the conflict. Sir William Monson, one of the Admirals of the expedition, tells us, that the Earl lost time in this chase, which might have been better employed; but his friend Essex appears to have considered his conduct in a different light, and conferred upon him, during his voyage, the honour of knighthood.

On his return to England, in October, 1597, he had the misfortune to find that the Queen had embraced the opinion of Monson, rather than that of Essex, and frowned with displeasure on the officer who had presumed to pursue and sink a Spanish vessel, without orders from his commander; a censure which was intended also to reach the General, with whom she was justly offended for having assumed the direction of a service to which his judgment and his talents were inadequate.

His introduction to parliamentary business began on the 24th of October, 1597, and terminated, with the session, on the 8th of February, 1598; and two days afterwards, he left London to commence his tour.

In the course of November, 1598, there is reason to suppose that this enterprising nobleman returned to London; soon after which event, his union with Elizabeth Vernon took place. His bride was the daughter of John Vernon of Hodnet, in the county of Salop, and she appears to have possessed a large share of personal charms. A portrait of her was drawn by Cornelius Jansen, which is said to have "the face and hands coloured with incomparable lustre." The unjustifiable resentment of the Queen, however, rendered this connection, for a time, a source of much misery to both parties. Her capricious tyranny was such, as to induce her to feel offended, if any of her courtiers had the audacity to love or marry

without her knowledge or permission; and the result of what she termed His Lordship's clandestine marriage, was the instant dismissal of himself and his lady to a prison. How long their confinement was protracted, cannot now be accurately ascertained; that it was long in the opinion of the Earl of Essex, appears from an address of his to the Lords of Council, in which he puts the following interrogation:—"Was it treason in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman, that neither *long* imprisonment, nor any punishment, besides, that hath been usual, in like cases, can satisfy, or appease?" But we do know that it could not have existed beyond March, 1599; for on the 27th of that month, Lord Southampton accompanied his friend Essex to Ireland, where, immediately on his arrival, he was appointed by the Earl, now Lord Deputy of that country, his general of the horse.

This military promotion of Southampton is one among numerous proofs of the imprudence of Essex, for it was not only without the Queen's knowledge, but, as Camden has informed us, "clean contrary to his instructions." What was naturally to be expected, therefore, soon occurred; Lord Southampton was, by the Queen's orders, deprived of his commission, in the August following, and on the 20th of September, 1599, he revisited London, where, apprehensive of the displeasure of Her Majesty, he absented himself from court, and endeavoured to soothe his inquietude by the attractions of the theatre, to which his ardent admiration of the genius of Shakspeare now daily induced him to recur.

The resentment of the Queen, however, though not altogether appeased, soon began to subside; and in December, 1599, when Lord Mountjoy was commissioned to supersede Essex in the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, Lord Southampton was one of the officers selected by Her Majesty to attend him. Farther than this she refused to condescend; for, though His Lordship solicited for some weeks the honour of kissing her hand, and was supported in this request by the influence of Cecil, he solicited in vain, and was at length compelled to rest satisfied with the expression of her wishes for the safety of his journey.

One unpleasant consequence of his former transient campaign in Ireland, had been a quarrel with the Lord Grey, who acting under him as a colonel of horse, had, from the impetuosity of youthful valour, attacked the rebel force without orders; a contempt of subordination which had been punished by his superior with a night's imprisonment. The fiery spirit of Grey could not brook even this requisite attention to discipline, and he sent Southampton a challenge, which the latter, on his departure for Ireland, in April, 1600, accepted, by declaring that he would meet Lord Grey in any part of that country. The Queen, however, for the present arrested the combat; but the animosity was imbibed by delay, and Lord Southampton felt it necessary to his character to break off his military engagements, which had conferred upon him the reputation of great bravery and professional skill, and had received the marked approval of the Lord Deputy, to satiate the resentment of Grey, who had again called him to a meeting, and fixed its scene in the Low Countries.

Of this interview we know nothing more than that it proved so completely abortive, that, shortly afterwards, Lord Grey attacked Southampton as he rode through the streets of London, an outrage which affords but a melancholy trait of the manners of the age, though punished on the spot by the immediate committal of the perpetrator to prison.

It had been happy, however, for the fame and repose of Southampton, had this been the only unfortunate contest in which he engaged; but he was recalled by Essex from the Low Countries, in order to assist him in his insurrectionary movements against the person and government of his sovereign. Blinded by the attachments of friendship, which he cultivated with enthusiastic warmth, and indignant at the treatment which he had lately received from the Queen, he too readily listened to the treasonable suggestions of Essex, and became one of the conspirators who assembled at the house of this nobleman on the 8th of February,

1601. Here they took the decisive step of imprisoning the Queen's privy counsellors who had been sent to enquire into the purport of their meeting, and from this mansion they sallied forth, with their view of exciting the citizens to rebellion. An enterprise so criminal, so rash, and chimerical, immediately met the fate which it merited; and the trial of Essex and Southampton for high treason took place on the 19th of February, when, both being found guilty, the former, as is well known, expiated his offence by death, while the latter, from the minor culpability of his views, from the modesty and contrition which he exhibited in his defence, and from the intercession of Cecil and the peers, obtained a remission of the sentence affecting his life, but was condemned to imprisonment in the Tower.

We have more than once mentioned the great partiality of Lord Southampton to dramatic literature, and it is somewhat remarkable that this partiality should have been rendered subservient to the machinations of treason; for Bacon tells us, that "the afternoon before the rebellion, Merick (afterwards the defender of Essex-house), with a great company of others, that afterwards were all in the action, had procured to be played before them the play of deposing King Richard the Second;—when it was told him by one of the players that the play was *old*, and they should have loss in playing it, because few would come to it, there were forty shillings extraordinary given to play it, and so thereupon played it was." It appears from the State Trials, vol. vii. p. 60, that the player to whom the forty shillings were given, was Augustine Philippes, one of the patentees of the Globe playhouse with Shakspeare, in 1603.

The term *old* applied to this play, which, according to the report of the Queen, "was played forty times in open streets and houses," has induced Dr. Farmer and Mr. Tyrwhitt to conclude that a play entitled Richard the Second, or Henry the Fourth, existed before Shakspeare's dramas on these subjects. This position, however, is dissented from by Mr. Chalmers, who says,—“In opposition to Farmer and Tyrwhitt, I hold, though I have a great respect for their memories, that it was illogical to argue, from a nonentity, against an entity; that as no such play as the Henry IV. which they spoke of had ever appeared, while Shakspeare's Richard II. was apparent to every eye, it was inconsequential reasoning in them to prefer the first play to the last: and I am, therefore, of opinion, that the play of deposing Richard II. which was seditiously played on the 7th of February, 1600–1. was Shakspeare's Richard II., that had been originally acted in 1596, and first printed in 1597.”

This opinion of Mr. Chalmers will be much strengthened when we reflect that Lord Southampton's well-known attachment to the muse of Shakspeare, would almost certainly induce him to prefer the play written by his favourite poet to the composition of an obscure, and, without doubt, a very inferior writer.

The death of Elizabeth terminated the confinement and the sufferings of Lord Southampton. No sooner had James acceded to the throne, than he sent an order for his release from the Tower, which took place on the 10th of April, 1603, and accompanied it with a request that he would meet him on his way to England. This might be considered as a certain presage of future favours, and was, indeed, speedily followed, not only by the reversal of his attainder, and the restoration of his property, but by an accumulation of honours. He was immediately appointed master of the game to the Queen; a pension of six hundred pounds per annum was allotted to his lady; in July, 1603, he was installed a knight of the garter, and created captain of Isle of Wight and Carisbrooke Castle, and in the following Spring he was constituted Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, and was chosen by the King as his companion in a journey to Royston.

This flow of good fortune was, however, transiently impeded by the jealousy of James, who stimulated by the machinations of some of his courtiers, envious of the returning prosperity of the Earl, was led to suspect that an improper intimacy had taken place between Southampton and his Queen; a charge of disaffection to His Majesty was, therefore, brought against His Lordship, and he was

apprehended towards the close of June, 1604; but not the smallest proof of his disloyalty having been substantiated, he was immediately released, and as immediately retaken into favour.

Of his perfect reinstatement, indeed, in the affections of James we possess a decided proof. Rowland Whyte, writing to Lord Shrewsbury, on the 4th of March, 1604, says,—“My La. Southampton was brought to bed of a young Lord upon St. David's Day (March 1st), in the morning; a St. to be much honored by that howse for so great a blessing, by wearing a leeke for ever upon that day.” Now this child was christened at court on the 27th of the same month, the King, and Lord Cranburn, with the Countess of Suffolk being gossips; an honour which was followed, in June, 1606, by a more substantial mark of regard, the appointment of His Lordship to be Warden of the New Forest, and Keeper of the Park of Lindhurst.

In 1609, he was constituted a member of the first Virginia Company, took a most active part in their concerns, and was the chief promoter of the different voyages to America, which were undertaken as well for the purposes of discovery as for private interest.

On the 4th of June, 1610, he officiated as carver at the magnificent festival which was given in honour of young Henry's assumption of the title of Prince of Wales; and in July, 1613, we find His Lordship entertaining the King at his house in the New Forest, whither he had returned from an expedition to the Continent, expressly for this purpose, and under the expectation of receiving a royal visit. After discharging this duty to his sovereign, he again left his native country, and was present, in the following year, with Lord Herbert of Cherbury, at the siege of Rees, in the dutchy of Cleves.

It was at this period that his reputation, as a patron of literature, attained its highest celebrity, and it is greatly to be desired that tradition had enabled us to dwell more minutely on his intercourse with the learned. His bounty to, and encouragement of, Shakspeare have conferred immortality on his name; to Florio, we have seen, he extended a durable and efficient support; Brathwayt, in his dedication of his “Scholar's Medley,” 1614, calls him “learnings best favourite;” and in 1617, he contributed very liberally to relieve the distresses of Minsheu, the author of “The Guide to Tongues.” Doubtless, had we more ample materials for his life, these had not been the only instances of his munificence to literary talent.

Still further promotion awaited this accomplished nobleman. When James visited Scotland, in 1617, he accompanied his sovereign, and rendered himself so acceptable by his courtesy and care, that, on the 19th of April, 1619, he was rewarded by the confidential situation of a privy-counsellor, an honour which he had long anxiously held in view.

This completion of his wishes, however, was not attended with the result which he had so sanguinely expected. He found himself unable, from principle, to join in the measures of the court, and the opposition which he now commenced against the King and his ministers, had, in a mind so ardent, a natural tendency to excess. In 1620, and the two following years, he was chosen, contrary to the wishes of government, treasurer of the Virginia Company, an office of great weight and responsibility, but to which his zeal and activity in forwarding the views of that corporation, gave him a just claim. Such, indeed, was the sense which the company entertained of his merits, that his name was annexed to several important parts of Virginia; as, for instance, Southampton-hundred, Hampton-roads, etc.

Whilst he opposed the court merely in its commercial arrangements, no personal inconvenience attended his exertions; but when, in the session of parliament which took place towards the commencement of the year 1621, he deemed it necessary to withstand the unconstitutional views of ministers, he immediately felt the arm of power. He had introduced with success a motion against illegal patents; and during the sitting of the 14th of March, so sharp an altercation oc-

curred between himself and the Marquis of Buckingham, that the interference of the Prince of Wales was necessary to appease the anger of the disputants.

This stormy discussion, and his Lordship's junction with the popular party, occasioned so much suspicion on the part of government, that on the 16th of June, twelve days after the prorogation of parliament, he was committed to the custody of the Dean of Westminster; nor was it until the 18th of the subsequent July, that he was permitted to return to his house at Titchfield, under a partial restraint, nor until the first of September that he was entirely liberated.

Unawed, however, by this unmerited persecution, and supported by a numerous and respectable party, justly offended at the King's pusillanimity in tamely witnessing his son-in-law's deprivation of the Palatinate, he came forward, with augmented activity, in the parliament of 1624, which opened on the 9th of February. Here he sat on several committees; and when James, on the 5th of the June following, found himself compelled to relinquish his pacific system, and to enter into a treaty with the States-General, granting them permission to raise four regiments in this country, he, unfortunately for himself and his son, procured the colonelcy of one of them.

Being under the necessity of taking up their winter-quarters at Rosendale in Holland, the Earl, and his eldest son Lord Wriothesly, were seized with a burning fever; "the violence of which distemper," says Wilson, "wrought most vigorously upon the heat of youth, overcoming the son first, and the drooping father, having overcome the fever, departed from Rosendale with an intention to bring his son's body to England; but at Bergen-op-zoom he died of a lethargy in the view and presence of the Relator, and were both in one small bark brought to Southampton." The son expired on the 5th of November, and his parent on the tenth, and they were both buried in the sepulchre of their fathers, at Titchfield, on Innocents' day, 1624.

Thus perished, in the fifty-second year of his age, Henry Earl of Southampton, leaving a widow and three daughters, who, from a letter preserved in the Cambala, appear to have been in confined circumstances; this epistle is from the Lord Keeper Williams to the Duke of Buckingham, dated Nov. 7th, 1624, and requesting of that nobleman "his grace and goodness towards the most distressed widow and children of my Lord Southampton."

If we except a constitutional warmth and irritability of temper, and their too common result, an occasional error of judgment, there did not exist, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, a character more truly amiable, great, and good than was that of Lord Southampton. To have secured, indeed, the reverence and affection of Shakspeare, was of itself a sufficient passport to the purest fame; but the love and admiration which attended him was general. As a soldier, he was brave, open, and magnanimous; as a statesman remarkable for integrity and independence of mind, and perhaps no individual of his age was a more enthusiastic lover, or a more munificent patron, of arts and literature.

The virtues of his private life, as well as these features of his public character, rest upon the authority of those who best knew him. To the "noble" and "honourable disposition," ascribed to him by Shakspeare, who affectionately declares, that he loves him "without end," we can add the respectable testimony of Chapman, Sir John Beaumont, and Wither, all intimately acquainted with him, and the second his particular friend.

In short, to adopt the language of an enthusiastic admirer of our dramatic bard, "Southampton died as he had lived, with a mind untainted: embalmed with the tears of every friend to virtue, and to splendid accomplishments: all who knew him, wished to him long life, still lengthened with all happiness."

That a nobleman so highly gifted, most amiable by his virtues, and most respectable by his talents and his taste, should have been strongly attached to Shakspeare, and this attachment returned by the poet with equal fervour, cannot excite much surprise; indeed, that more than pecuniary obligation was the tie that

connected Shakspeare with his patron, must appear from the tone of his dedications, especially from that prefixed to the Rape of Lucrece, which breathes an air of affectionate friendship, and respectful familiarity. We should also recollect, that, according to tradition, the great pecuniary obligation of Shakspeare to his patron, was much posterior to the period of these dedications, being given for the purpose of enabling the poet to make a purchase at his native town of Stratford, a short time previous to his retirement thither.

It may, therefore, with safety be concluded, that admiration and esteem were the chief motives which actuated Shakspeare in all the stages of his intercourse with Lord Southampton, to whom, in 1593, we have found dedicated the "first heir of his invention."

Our reasons for believing that this poem was written in the interval which occurred between the years 1587 and 1590, have been already given in a former part of the work, and we shall here, therefore, only transcribe the title-page of the original edition, which, though entered in the Stationers' books by Richard Field, on the 18th of April, 1593, was supposed not to have been published before 1594, until Mr. Malone had the good fortune to procure a copy from a provincial catalogue, perhaps the only one remaining in existence: *—

"VENUS AND ADONIS.

Vilia miretur Vulgus, mihi flavus Apollo.
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.

London. By Richard Field, and are to be solde at the Signe of the White Greyhound, in Paules Church Yard. 1593."

This, the earliest offspring of our poet's prolific genius, consists of one hundred and ninety-nine stanzas, each stanza including six lines, of which the first four are in alternate rhyme, and the fifth and sixth form a couplet. Its length, indeed, is one of its principal defects; for it has led, not only to a fatiguing circumlocution, in point of language, but it has occasioned the poet frequently to expand his imagery into a diffuseness which sometimes destroys its effect; and often to indulge in a strain of reflection more remarkable for its subtlety of conceit, than for its appropriation to the incidents before him. Two other material objections must be noticed, as arising from the conduct of the poem, which, in the first place, so far as it respects the character of Adonis, is forced and unnatural; and, in the second, has tempted the poet into the adoption of language so meretricious, as entirely to vitiate the result of any moral purpose which he might have had in view.

These deductions being premised, we do not hesitate to assert, that the Venus and Adonis contains many passages worthy of the genius of Shakspeare; and that, as a whole, it is superior in poetic fervour to any production of a similar kind by his contemporaries, anterior to 1587. It will be necessary, however, where so much discrepancy of opinion has existed, to substantiate the first of these assertions, by the production of specimens which shall speak for themselves; and as the conduct and moral of the piece have been given up as indefensible, these must, consequently, be confined to a display of its poetical value; of its occasional merit with regard to versification and imagery.

In the management of his stanza, Shakspeare has exhibited a more general attention to accuracy of rhythm and harmony of cadence, than was customary in his age; few metrical imperfections, indeed, are discoverable either in this piece, or in any of his minor poems; but we are not limited to this negative praise, being able to select from his first effort instances of positive excellence in the structure of his verse.

* "Mr. Malone," relates Mr. Beloe, "had long been in search of this edition, and when he was about to give up all hope of possessing it, he obtained a copy from a provincial catalogue. But he still did not procure it till after a long and tedious negotiation, and a most enormous price."—*Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. i. p. 363.

Of the light and airy elegance which occasionally characterises the composition of his *Venus and Adonis*, the following will be accepted as no inadequate proofs:—

“ Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear,
Or, like a fairy, trip upon the green,
Or like a nymph, with long dishevel'd hair,
Dance on the sands, and yet no footing seen.

“ If love have lent you twenty thousand tongues,
And every tongue more moving than your own,
Bewitching like the wanton mermaid's songs,
Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown.”

To terminate each stanza with a couplet remarkable for its sweetness, terseness, or strength, is a refinement almost peculiar to modern times, yet Shakspeare has sometimes sought for and obtained this harmony of close: thus *Venus*, lamenting the beauty of Nature after the death of *Adonis*, exclaims,

“ The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim;
But true sweet beauty liv'd and died with him;”

and again, when reproaching the apathy of her companion,—

“ O learn to love; the lesson is but plain,
And, once made perfect, never lost again.”

Nor are there wanting passages in which energy and force are very skilfully combined with melody and rhythm; of the subsequent extracts, which are truly excellent for their vigorous construction, the lines in *Italics* present us with the point and cadence of the present day. *Venus*, endeavouring to excite the affection of *Adonis*, who is represented

“ more lovely than a man,
More white and red than doves or roses are,”

tells him,

“ I have been woo'd, as I entreat thee now,
Even by the stern and direful god of war,
Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow—
Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
His batter'd shield, his uncontrolled crest,
And for my sake hath learn'd to sport and dance,
To coy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest;”

and, on finding her efforts fruitless, she bursts forth into the following energetic reproach:—

“ Fie, lifeless picture, cold and senseless stone,
Well-painted idol, image, dull and dead,
Statue contenting but the eye alone,
Thing like a man, but of no woman bred.”

The death of *Adonis*, however, banishes all vestige of resentment, and, amid numerous exclamations of grief and anguish, gives birth to prophetic intimations of the hapless fate of all succeeding attachments:—

“ Since thou art dead, lo! here I prophesy,
Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend;” &c. &c.

These passages are not given with the view of impressing upon the mind of the reader, that such is the constant strain of the versification of the *Venus and Adonis*; but merely to show, that, while in narrative poetry he equals his contemporaries in the general structure of his verse, he has produced, even in his earliest attempt, instances of beauty, melody, and force, in the mechanism of his stanzas, which have no parallel in their pages. In making this assertion, it must not be forgotten, that we date the composition of *Venus and Adonis* anterior to

1590, that the comparison solely applies to narrative poetry, and consequently that all contest with Spenser is precluded.

It now remains to be proved, that the merits of this mythological story are not solely founded on its occasional felicity of versification; but that in description, in the power of delineating, with a master's hand, the various objects of nature, it possesses more claims to notice than have hitherto been allowed.

After the noble pictures of the horse which we find drawn in the book of Job, and in Virgil, few attempts to sketch this spirited animal can be expected to succeed; yet, among these few, impartial criticism may demand a station for the lines:—

“ Imperiously he leaps, he neighs, he bounds,
And now his woven girts he breaks asunder,
The bearing earth with his hard hoof he wounds,
Whose hollow womb resounds like heaven's thunder.”—&c. &c.

Venus, apprehensive for the fate of Adonis, should he attempt to hunt the boar, endeavours to dissuade him from his purpose, by drawing a most formidable description of that savage inmate of the woods, and by painting, on the other hand, the pleasures to be derived from the pursuit of the hare. The danger necessarily incurred from attacking the former, and the various efforts by which the latter tries to escape her pursuers, are presented to us with great fidelity and warmth of colouring.

“ Thou had'st been gone, quoth she, sweet boy, ere this,
But that thou told'st me, thou would'st hunt the boar,” &c.

This poem abounds with similes, many of which include miniature sketches of no small worth and beauty. A few of these shall be given, and they will not fail to impart a favourable impression of the fertility and resources of the rising bard. The fourth and fifth, which we have distinguished by Italics, more especially deserve notice, the former representing a minute piece of natural history, and the latter describing in words adequate to their subject, one of the most terrible convulsions of nature.

“ as one on shore
Gazing upon a late-embarked friend,
Till the wild waves will have him seen no more,
Whose ridges with the meeting clouds contend.

“ as one that unaware
Hath dropp'd a precious jewel in the flood.”

“ Or 'stonish'd as night-wanderers often are,
Their light blown out in some mistrustful wood.”

*“ Or, as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain.”*

*“ As when the wind, imprison'd in the ground,
Struggling for passage, earth's foundation shakes.”*

We shall close these extracts from the Venus and Adonis, with two passages which form a striking contrast, and which prove that the author possessed, at the commencement of his career, no small portion of those powers which were afterwards to astonish the world; powers alike unrivalled either in developing the terrible or the beautiful.

“ And therefore hath she bribed the Destinies,
To cross the curious workmanship of nature,
To mingle beauty with infirmities,
And pure perfection with impure defeature;
Making it subject to the tyranny
Of sad mischances and much misery;

As burning fevers, agues pale and faint,
Life-poisoning pestilence, and frenzies wood,
The marrow-eating sickness, whose attaint
Disorder breeds by heating of the blood:
Surfeits, impostumes, grief, and damn'd despair—

And not the least of all these maladies,
But in one minute's sight brings beauty under—
As mountain snow melts with the mid-day sun.

“ Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
That cedar tops and hills seem burnish'd gold.

Venus salutes him with this fair good morrow:
O thou clear god, and patron of all light,
From whom each lamp and shining star doth
borrow
The beauteous influence that makes him bright.”

If we compare the *Venus and Adonis* of Shakspeare with its classical prototypes; with the “*Epitaphium Adonidis*” of Bion, and the beautiful narrative of Ovid, which terminates the tenth book of his *Metamorphoses*, we must confess the inferiority of the English poem to the former in pathos, and to the latter in elegance; but if we contrast it with the productions of its own age, it cannot fail of being allowed a large share of relative merit. It has imbibed, indeed, too many of the conceits and puerilities of the period in which it was produced, and it has lost much interest by deviating from tradition; for, as Mr. Steevens has remarked, “the common and more pleasing fable assures us, that

——— “when bright Venus yielded up her charms,
The blest Adonis languish’d in her arms;”

yet the passages which we have quoted, and the general strain of the poem, are such as amply to account for the popularity which it once enjoyed.

That this was great, that the work was highly valued by poetic minds, and, as might be supposed, from the nature of its subject, the favourite of the young, the ardent, and susceptible, there are not wanting several testimonies. In 1595, John Weever had written at the age of nineteen, as he informs us, a collection of Epigrams, which he published in 1599; * of these the twenty-second is inscribed “*Ad Gulielmum Shakspeare,*” and contains a curious though quaint encomium on some of the poet’s earliest productions:—

“Honie tong’d Shakspeare, when I saw thine issue,
I swore Apollo got them, and none other,
Their rosie-tainted features clothed in tissue,
Some heaven-born goddesse said to be their mother.
Rose-cheekt Adonis with his amber tresses,
Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
Chaste Lucretia virgine-like her dresses,
Proud lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her.”

In a copy of Speght’s edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey, this physician, the noted opponent of Nash, has inserted the following remarks:—“The younger sort take much delight in Shakspeare’s *Venus and Adonis*; but his *Lucrece*, and his tragedy of *Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, have it in them to please the wiser sort, 1598.”

Meres, also, in his *Wit’s Treasury*, published in the same year with the above date, draws a parallel between Ovid and Shakspeare, resulting from the composition of this piece and his other minor poems. “As the soule of Euphorbus,” he observes, “was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare, witnes his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred sonnets among his private friends, etc.”

A third tribute, and of a similar kind, was paid to the early efforts of our author in 1598, by Richard Barnefield, from which it must be inferred that the versification of Shakspeare was considered by his contemporaries as pre-eminently sweet and melodious, a decision for which many stanzas in the *Venus and Adonis* might furnish sufficient foundation:—

“And Shakspeare thou, whose honey-flowing vein,
(Pleasing the world), thy praises doth contain,
Whose *Venus*, and whose *Lucrece*, sweet and chaste,
Thy name in fame’s immortal book hath plac’d,
Live ever you, at least in fame live ever!
Well may the body die, but fame die never.”

That singularly curious old comedy, “*The Returne from Parnassus*,” written in 1606, descanting on the poets of the age, introduces Shakspeare solely on ac-

* Epigrammes in the oldest Cut and newest Fashion. A twice seven Houres (in so many Weekes) Studie. No longer (like the Fashion) not unlike to continue. The first seven, John Weever. 1599. 12mo.”—Vide *Beloe’s Anecdotes*, vol. vi. p. 156.

count of his miscellaneous poems, a striking proof of their popularity; and, like his predecessors, the author characterises them by the sweetness of their metre:

“ Who loves Adonis love, or Lucre’s rape,
His sweeter verse containes hart-robbling life,
Could but a graver subject him content,
Without love’s foolish lazy languishment.” *

It appears, likewise, from this extract, and will further appear from two subsequent quotations, that the meretricious tendency of the *Venus and Adonis* did not altogether escape the notice or the censure of the period which produced it.

A more ample eulogium on the merits of Shakspeare’s first production issued from the press in 1607, in a poem composed by William Barksted, and entitled, “*Mirrha the Mother of Adonis; or Lustes Prodigies*,” of which the concluding lines thus appreciate the value of his model:—

“ But stay, my Muse, in thine own confines keep,
And wage not warre with so deere lov’d a neighbour;
But having sung thy day-song, rest and sleep;
Preserve thy small fame, and his greater favor.
His song was worthie merit; Shakspeare, hee
Sung the faire blossome, thou the wither’d tree:
Laurel is due to him; his art and wit
Hath purchas’d it; cyprus thy brows will fit.” †

A pasquinade on the literature of his times was published by John Davies of Hereford in 1611; it first appeared in his “*Scourge of Folly*,” under the title of “*A Scourge for Paper-Persecutors*,” and among other objects of his satire Paper, here personified, is represented as complaining of the pruriency of Shakspeare’s youthful fancy.

“ Another (ah, harde happe) mee vilifies
With art of love, and how to subtilize,
Making lewd *Venus* with eternal lines
To tie *Adonis* to her love’s designs;
Fine wit is shewn therein: but finer ’twere,
If not attired in such bawdy geare.”

The charge of *subtilizing* which this passage conveys, may certainly be substantiated against the minor poetry of our bard; no small portion of it is visible in the *Venus and Adonis*; but the Rape of Lucrece is extended by its admission to nearly a duplicate of what ought to have been its proper size.

To the quotations now given, as commemorative of Shakspeare’s primary effort in poetry, we shall add one, whose note of praise is, that our author was equally excellent in painting lust or continency:—

“ Shakspeare, that nimble Mercury thy brain
Lulls many-hundred Argus’ eyes asleep,
So fit for all thou fashionest thy vein,
At the horse-foot fountain thou hast drunk full deep.
Virtue’s or vice’s theme to thee all one is;
Who loves chaste life, there’s *Lucrece* for a teacher:
Who list read lust, there’s *Venus and Adonis*,
True model of a most lascivious lecher.” ‡

* Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 49.

† Malone’s Supplement, vol. i. p. 463.

‡ Many passages, I believe, might be added to those given in the text, which point out the great popularity of our author’s earliest effort in poetry. Thus, in the “*Merrie Conceited Jests*” of George Peele, an author who died in or before 1598, the Tapster of an Inn in Pye-corner is represented as “much given to poetry: for he had ingrossed the Knight of the Sunne, *Venus and Adonis*, and other pamphlets.”—*Reprint*, p. 28.

Again in the “*Dumb Knight*,” an Historical Comedy, by Lewis Machin, printed in 1608, one of the characters, after quoting several lines from *Venus and Adonis*, concludes by saying,—

“ Go thy way, thou best book in the world.

Veloups. I pray you, sir, what book do you read?

President. A book that never an orator’s clerk in this kingdom but is beholden unto; it is called, *Maid’s Philosophy, or Venus and Adonis.*—*Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii. p. 145.

From the admiration thus warmly expressed by numerous contemporaries, even when connected with slight censure, it will, of course, be inferred that the demand for re-impressions of the *Venus and Adonis* would be frequent; and this was, indeed, the fact. In the year following the publication of the *editio princeps*, there is reason to conclude that the second impression was printed; for the poem appears again entered in the Stationers' books on the 23d of June, 1594, by—— Harrison, sen.; unless this entry be merely preliminary to the edition of 1596, which was printed in small octavo, by Richard Field, for John Harrison.* Of the subsequent editions, one was published, in 1600, by John Harrison, in 12mo; another occurs in 1602, and, in 1607, the *Venus and Adonis* was reprinted at Edinburgh, "which much be considered," remarks Mr Beloe, "as an indubitable proof, that at a very early period the Scotch knew and admired the genius of Shakspeare."† The title-page of this edition has the same motto as in the original impression; beneath it is a phoenix in the midst of flames, and then follows "Edinburgh. Printed by John Wreittoun, are to bee sold in his shop, a little beneath the Salt Trone. 1607."

It is highly probable, that between the period of the Edinburgh copy, and the year 1617, the date of the next extant edition, an intervening impression may have been issued; *Venus and Adonis*, it should be noticed, is entered in the Stationers' Register, by W. Barrett, Feb. 16, 1616; and the next entry is by John Parker, March 8, 1619, preparatory perhaps to the edition which appeared in 1620. In 1630, another re-print was called for, which was again repeated in 1640, and in the various subsequent editions of our author's poems.

The same favourable reception which accompanied the birth and progress of the *Venus and Adonis* attended, likewise, the next poem which our author produced, *The Rape of Lucrece*. This was printed in quarto, in 1594, by Richard Field, for John Harrison, and has a copious Argument prefixed, which, as Mr. Malone remarks, is a curiosity, being, with the two dedications to the Earl of Southampton, the only prose compositions of our great poet (not in a dramatic form) now remaining.

The Rape of Lucrece is written in stanzas of seven lines each; the first four in alternate rhyme; the fifth line corresponding with the second and fourth, and the sixth and seventh lines forming a couplet. To this construction it is probable that Shakspeare was led through the popularity of Daniel's "*Complaint of Rosamond*," which was published in 1592, and exhibits the same metrical system.

If we had just reason for condemning the prolixity of *Venus and Adonis*, a still greater motive for similar censure will be found in the *Rape of Lucrece*, which occupies no less than two hundred and sixty-five stanzas, and, of course, includes one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five lines, whilst the tale, as conducted by Ovid, is impressively related in about one hundred and forty verses!

From what source Shakspeare derived his fable, whether through a classic or a Gothic channel is uncertain. The story is of frequent occurrence in ancient writers; for, independent of the narrative in the *Fasti* of the Roman poet, it has been told by Dionysius Halicarnassensis, by Livy, by Dion Cassius, and Diodorus Siculus. "I learn from Coxeter's notes," says Warton, "that the *Fasti* were translated into English verse before the year 1570. If so, the many little pieces now current on the subject of Lucretia, although her legend is in Chaucer, might immediately originate from this source. In 1568, occurs a Ballett called, '*The greivous complaynt of Lucrece*.' And afterwards, in the year 1569, is licensed to James Robertes, '*A ballet of the death of Lucryssia*.' There is also a ballad of the legend of Lucrece, printed in 1576. These publications might give rise to Shakspeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, which appeared in 1594. At this period of our poetry, we find the same subject occupying the attention of the public for many years, and

* It is the more probable that the entry of 1594 indicates a separate edition, as an entry of the impression of 1596 appears in the Stationers' Register, by W. Leake, dated June 23, 1596.

† Beloe's *Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 363. This copy is in the possession of Mr. Chalmers.

successively presented in new and various forms by different poets. Lucretia was the grand example of conjugal fidelity throughout the Gothic ages."*

One material advantage which the Rape of Lucrece possesses over its predecessor, is, that its moral is unexceptionable; and, on this account, we have the authority of Dr. Gabriel Harvey, that it was preferred by the *graver* readers. In every other respect, no very decided superiority, we are afraid, can be adduced. It is more studied and elaborate, it is true; but the result of this labour has in many instances been only an accumulation of far-fetched imagery and fatiguing circumlocution. Yet, notwithstanding these defects, palpable as they are, the poem has not merited the depreciation to which it has been subjected by some very fastidious critics. It occasionally delights us by a few fervid sketches of imagination and description; and by several passages of a moral and pathetic cast, clothed in language of much energy and beauty; and though the general tone of the versification be more heavy and encumbered than that of the *Venus and Adonis*, it is sometimes distinguished by point, legerity, and grace. The quotations, indeed, which we are about to give from this neglected poem, are not only such as would confer distinction on any work, but to say more, they are worthy of the poet which produced them.

Of metrical sweetness, of moral reflection, and of splendid and appropriate imagery, we find an exquisite specimen at the very opening of the poem. Collatine, boasting of his felicity "in the possession of his beauteous mate," the bard exclaims—

"O happiness enjoy'd but of a few!
And, if possess'd, as soon decayed and done
As if the morning's silver melting dew,
Against the golden splendour of the sun!
A date expir'd, and cancel'd ere begun." *Stanza iv.*

We must not omit also the first clause of the sixteenth stanza, which affords an admirable example of spirited and harmonious rhythm. Tarquin in addressing Lucrece:—

"He stories to her ears her husband's fame,
Won in the fields of fruitful Italy;
And decks with praises Collatine's high name;
Made glorious by his manly chivalry,
With bruised arms and wreaths of victory."

One of the peculiar excellencies of the Rape of Lucrece, is its frequent expression of correct sentiment in pointed language and emphatic verse. Tarquin, soliloquising on the crime which he is about to commit, thus gives vent to the agonies of momentary contrition:—

"Fair torch, burn out thy light, and lend it not
To darken her whose light excelleth thine!" &c.

The same terseness of diction and concinnity of versification appear in the subsequent lines:—

"Then for thy husband's and thy children's sake,
Tender my suit: bequeath not to their lot
The shame that from them no device can take,
The blemish that will never be forgot."

It may, likewise, be added, that simplicity and strength in the modulation, together with a forcible plainness of phraseology, characterise a few stanzas, of which one shall be given as an instance:—

"O teach me how to make mine own excuse!
Or, at the least, this refuge let me find;
Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse,
Immaculate and spotless is my mind;

* Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 415, 416.—"It is remarkable," says the historian, in a note on this passage, that the sign of Berthelette, the king's printer in Fleet-street, who flourished about 1540, was the Lucretia, or, as he writes it, *Lucretia Romana*."

That was not forc'd ; that never was inclin'd
To accessory yieldings—but, still pure,
Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure."

To these short examples, which are selected for the purpose of showing, not only the occasional felicity of the poet in the mechanism of his verse, but the uncommon and unapprehended worth of what this mechanism is the vehicle, we shall subjoin three passages of greater length, illustrative of what this early production of our author's Muse can exhibit in the three great departments of the descriptive, the pathetic, and the morally sublime.

Lucrece, in the paroxysms of her grief, is represented as telling her mournful story

" To pencil'd pensiveness and coloured sorrow,"

to a piece

" Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy,"

where

" Many a dry drop seemed a weeping tear,
Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife ;"

and where

" The red blood reek'd to show the painter's strife,
And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights :"

" She throws her eyes about the painting round,
And whom she finds forlorn, she doth lament : " &c.

This is a picture, of which the colouring, but too often overcharged in every other part of the poem, may be pronounced chaste and correct.

A simple and unaffected flow of thought, expressed in diction of equal purity and plainness, are essential requisites towards the production of the pathetic, either in poetry or prose ; and, unfortunately, in the Rape of Lucrece, these excellencies, especially in their combined state, are of very rare occurrence. We are not, however, totally destitute of passages which, by their tenderness and simplicity, appeal to the heart. Thus the complete wretchedness of Lucretia is powerfully and simply painted in the following lines :—

" The little birds that tune their morning's joy,
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody.
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy ;
Sad souls are slain in merry company ;
Grief best is pleas'd with grief's society :
True sorrow then is feelingly suffic'd,
When with like semblance it is sympathiz'd."

She, accordingly, invokes the melancholy nightingale, and invites her, from similarity of fate, to be her companion in distress :—

" And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day,
As shaming any eye should thee behold,
Some dark deep desert, seated from the way,
That knows nor parching heat nor freezing cold,
Will we find out ; and there we will unfold
To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds :
Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle minds."

"Shakspeare has here," says Mr. Malone, in a note on the first of these stanzas, "as in all his writings, shown an intimate acquaintance with the human heart. Every one that has felt the pressure of grief will readily acknowledge that 'mirth doth seek the bottom of annoy.'"

The last specimen which we shall select from this poem, would alone preserve it from oblivion, were it necessary to protect from such a fate any work which bears the mighty name of Shakspeare. Indeed, whether we consider this extract

in relation to its diction, its metre, its sentiment, or the sublimity of its close, it is alike calculated to excite our admiration :—

“ Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring ;
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers,
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing ;
What virtue breeds, iniquity devours :
We have no good that we can say is ours,
But ill-annexed opportunity
Or kills his life, or else his quality.

O, Opportunity ! thy guilt is great :
’Tis thou that execut’st the traitor’s treason ;
Thou set’st the wolf where he the lamb may get ;
Whoever plots the sin, thou point’st the season ;
’Tis thou that spurn’st at right, at law, at reason ;
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.”

We have already seen, that in the passages quoted from contemporary writers in favour of Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece has, with the exception of two instances, been honoured with equal notice and equal approbation. Here, therefore, it will only be necessary to add those notices in which the latter production is the exclusive object of praise.

Of these, the earliest is to be found in the first edition of Drayton’s “*Matilda, the faire and chaste Daughter of Lord Robert Fitzwater,*” published in 1594, a few months, or probably weeks, after the appearance of the Rape of Lucrece. In this impression, and *solely* in this impression, the Heroine thus eulogises the composition of our bard :—

“ Lucrece, of whom proud Rome hath boasted long,
Lately reviv’d to live another age,
And here arriv’d to tell of Tarquin’s wrong,
Her chaste denial, and the tyrants rage,
Acting her passions on our stately stage,
She is remember’d, all forgetting me,
Yet I as fair and chaste as ere was she.” †

The year following Drayton’s *Matilda*, a work was printed in quarto, under the title of “*Polimanteia,*” in the margin of which Shakspeare’s *Lucrece* is thus cursorily mentioned. “All praise-worthy Lucretia, Sweet Shakspeare.” *

The next separate notice of this poem occurs in some verses prefixed to the second edition of “*Willobie his Avis,*” which appeared in 1596. They are subscribed “*Contraria Contrariis Vigilantius Dormitanus,*” and open with the allusion to Shakspeare’s *Lucrece* :—

“ In lavine land though Livie boast,
There hath beene seene a constant dame ;
Though Rome lament that she have lost
The garland of her rarest fame,
Yet now ye see that here is found
As great a faith in English ground.

Though Collatine have dearly bought
To high renowne a lasting life,
And found, that most in vaine have sought
To have a faire and constant wife,
Yet Tarquine pluckt his glistening grape,
And Shake-speare paintes poor Lucrece rape.” †

* “*Polimanteia, or The meanes lawfull and unlawfull, to judge of the fall of a Common-wealth, against the frivolous and foolish conjectures of this age. Whereunto is added, A letter from England to her three daughters, Cambridge, Oxford, Innes of Court, and to all the rest of her inhabitants, &c. &c. Printed by John Legate, Printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1595.*”

“This work,” remarks Mr. Haslewood, “is divided into three parts ; the first, *Polimanteia*, is on the subtleties and unlawfulness of Divination, the second, an address from England to her three Daughters ; and the third, England to her Inhabitants, concluding with the speeches of Religion and Loyalty to her children. Some researches have been made by a friend to ascertain the author’s name, but without success. He was evidently a man of learning, and well acquainted with the works of contemporary writers, both foreign and domestic. The second part of his work is too interesting, from the names enumerated in the margin, not to be given entire. The mention of Shakspeare is two years earlier than Meres’s *Palladis Tamia*, a circumstance that has escaped the research of all the Commentators ; although a copy of the *Polimanteia* was possessed by Dr. Farmer, and the work is repeatedly mentioned by Oldys, in his manuscript notes on *Langbaine*.”—*British Bibliographer*, vol. i. p. 274.

† *British Bibliographer*, No. XIV. p. 247.

To these contemporary notices, with the view of showing what was thought of the Rape of Lucrece half a century after its production, we shall subjoin the opinion of S. Sheppard, who, in "The Times Displayed in Six Sestiyads," printed in 1646, 4to, comparing Shakspeare with Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, adds—

" His sweet and his to be admired lay
He wrote of lustful Tarquin's rape, shews he
Did understand the depth of poesie." *

The editions of the Rape of Lucrece were as numerous as those of the Venus and Adonis. "In thirteen years after their first appearance," remarks Mr. Malone, "six impressions of each of them were printed, while in the same period, his Romeo and Juliet, one of his most popular plays, passed only twice through the press."

Of the early re-impressions, those which are extant, are in small octavo, of the date 1596, 1598, 1600, 1607, 1616, 1624, 1632, etc. In the title of that which was published in 1616, occur the words *newly revised and corrected*.

"When this copy first came to my hands," says Mr. Malone, "it occurred to me, that our author had perhaps an intention of revising and publishing all his works (which his fellow-comedians, in their preface to his plays, seem to hint he would have done, if he had lived), and that he began with this early production of his muse, but was prevented by death from completing his scheme; for he died in the same year in which this *corrected* copy of *Lucrece* (as it is called) was printed. But on an attentive examination of this edition, I have not the least doubt that the piece was revised by some other hand. It is so far from being correct, that it is certainly the most inaccurate and corrupt of all the ancient copies." †

To the Rape of Lucrece succeeds, in the order of publication, the Passionate Pilgrim. This imperfect collection of our author's minor pieces was printed by W. Jaggard in 1599, in small octavo, and with the poet's name.

Not only is this little work entitled to notice from the priority of its public appearance, before the larger collection termed "Sonnets;" but there is, we think, sufficient proof that a part of its contents had, as compositions, a prior origin. It opens with a sonnet inserted in Love's Labour's Lost, ‡ a play which, according to Mr. Chalmers, was written in 1592, and not later, even in the calculation of Mr. Malone, than 1594. The second sonnet, and the fourth, seventh, and ninth, are founded on the story of Venus and Adonis, and, from their similarity in diction, imagery, and sentiment, to "the first heir" of the poet's "invention," appear to have been originally intended, either for insertion in the greater work, or were preludes to its composition: they "seem," remarks Mr. Malone, "to have been essays of the author when he first conceived the idea of writing a poem on the subject of Venus and Adonis, and before the scheme of his poem was adjusted;" and he adds, in a subsequent page, that the eighth sonnet "seems to have been intended for a dirge to be sung by Venus on the death of Adonis."

Besides these intimations of very early composition in the Passionate Pilgrim, a similar inference may be drawn from our author's allusion, in his sixth sonnet, to Dowland as a celebrated lutenist, and from a notice in the old copy that the ballad

* British Bibliographer, No. V. p. 533.

† An edition of the Rape of Lucrece, with a supplement by John Quarles, was published about 1676; for at the end of a copy of Burton's Anatomie of Melancholy, in my possession, printed in 1676, and the eighth edition, is a catalogue of books sold by Peter Parker, the proprietor of the above impression, among which occurs the following article:—

"The Rape of Lucrece committed by Tarquin the sixth, and remarkable judgements that befell him for it, by that incomparable Master of our English Poetry William Shakspeare, Gentleman. Whereunto is annexed the Banishment of Tarquin or the reward of Lust, by John Quarles, 8vo."

It is remarkable, that, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, our author's Venus and Adonis, and The Rape of Lucrece, were re-published as *State Poems*, though it would puzzle the most acute critic to discover, in either of them, the smallest allusion to the politics of their age. The work in which they are thus enrolled, and which betrays also the most complete ignorance of the era of their production, is entitled "*State Poems.—Poems on Affairs of State from 1620 to 1707*. London, 1703-7. 8vo. 4 vols.

‡ Act iv. sc. 3.—We have found reason, as will be seen hereafter, to ascribe this play to the year 1591.

commencing "It was a lording's daughter," and the five following poems, were set to music, which music, says Oldys, in one of his manuscripts, was the composition of John and Thomas Morley. Now Dowland had obtained celebrity in his art as early as 1590; and in 1597, when Bachelor of Music in both the universities, published his first book of Songs or Airs, in four parts, for the Lute; and Tho. Morley, who, there is reason to believe, was deceased in 1600, had still earlier been in vogue, and continued to publish his compositions until 1597, in which year appeared his Canzonets.

When Meres, therefore, printed his "Wit's Treasury" in 1598, it is highly probable that the close of the following passages, already quoted for a different purpose, and which has been thought to refer exclusively to the "Sonnets" afterwards published in 1599, particularly alluded also to the sonnets of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which had been privately circulated and set to music by Dowland and Morley. "As the soul of Euphorbus," says he, "was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare. Witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, etc."

It is remarkable that the year following this notice by Meeres, appeared Jaggard's first edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim*. May we not conclude, therefore, that this encomium on the manuscript sonnets of Shakspeare, induced Jaggard to collect all the lyric poetry of our author which he could obtain through his own research and that of his friends, and to publish it surreptitiously with a title of his own manufacture? That it was not sent into the world under the direction, or even with the knowledge of Shakspeare, must be evident from the circumstance of Marlowe's madrigal, "Come live with me," etc. being inserted in the collection; nor is it likely, setting this error aside, that Shakspeare, in his thirty-third year, at a time when he had written several plays including some dramatic songs, and undoubtedly had produced a large portion of the sonnets which were given to the world in 1609, would have published a collection so scanty and unconnected as the *Passionate Pilgrim*, which, independent of Marlowe's poem, contains but twenty pieces.

Indeed we are warranted in attributing not only the edition of 1599 solely to the officiousness of Jaggard, but likewise two subsequent impressions, of which the last furnishes us with some further curious proofs of this printer's skill in book-making, and also with an interesting anecdote relative to our bard.

The precise period when the second edition issued from the press was unknown to Mr. Malone, and is not yet ascertained; but the third edition, printed in 1612, in small octavo, and published by W. Jaggard, is connected with the following literary history.

In 1609, Thomas Heywood published a folio volume, entitled "*Troia Britanica: or, Great Britaine's Troy. A Poem, divided into 17 severall Cantos, intermixed with many poetickall Tales. Concluding with an Universal Chronicle, from the Creation, untill these present Times.*" This work was printed and published by William Jaggard, and includes two translations from Ovid, namely the epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, which being so pertinent to our historie," says Heywood, "I thought it necessary to translate."

It happened, unfortunately for the honest fame of Jaggard, that when he published the third edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1612, he was tempted, with the view of increasing the size of his volume, to insert these versions by Heywood, dropping, however, the translator's name, and, of course, suffering them to be ascribed to Shakspeare, who appears in the title-page as the author of the entire collection.

Shortly after this imposition on the public had gone forth, Heywood produced his "*Apology for Actors. Containing three briefe Treatises. 1. Their Antiquity. 2. Their Ancient Dignity. 3. The true use of their quality.* London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1612," 4to; and at the close of this thin treatise,

which consists but of sixty pages, the author addresses the following remarkable epistle to his *new* bookseller:—

“ To my approved good friend, Mr. Nicholas Okes.

“ The infinite faults escaped in my booke of Britaine’s Troy, by the negligence of the printer, as the misquotations, mistaking of sillables, misplacing halfe lines, coining of strange and never heard of words: these being without number, when I would have taken a particular account of the errata, the printer answered me, hee would not publish his owne disworkmanship, but rather let his owne fault lye upon the necke of the author: and being fearfull that others of his quality had beene of the same nature, and condition, and finding you, on the contrary, so carefull and industrious, so serious and laborious, to doe the author all the rights of the presse; I could not choose but gratulate your honest endeavours with this short remembrance. Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, and printing them in a lesse volume, under the name of another (Shakspeare), which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee, to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his own name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage under whom he hath publisht them, so the author (Shakspeare) I know much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name. These, and the like dishonesties, I know you to be cleare of; and I could wish but to bee the happy author of so worthy a worke as I could willingly commit to your care and workmanship.

“ Your’s ever, THOMAS HEYWOOD.”

Here nothing can be more evident than that Jaggard introduced these translations in the “*Passionate Pilgrim*,” without the permission, or even the knowledge of Shakspeare, and further, that he, Shakspeare, was much offended with Jaggard for so doing; a piece of information which completely rescues the memory of Shakspeare from any connivance in the fraud: and yet, strange as it may appear, on this very epistle of Heywood has been founded a charge of imposition against Shakspeare, and the only defence offered for the calumniated poet has been, that, contrary to the public and private assertion of Heywood, he, and not Heywood, was the translator of the Epistles in question.

This interpretation can only be accounted for on the supposition that both the accuser and defender have alike mistaken the language of Heywood, and have conceived him to have been speaking of himself, when, in fact, he was referring to Shakspeare; for, that the passage, “so the author I know much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name,” can only be applied to our great poet, must be clear from the consideration that Jaggard, so far from making bold with the name of Heywood, dropped it altogether, while he daringly committed the very offence as to Shakspeare, by clandestinely affixing his name to the versions of Heywood.

It will be right, however, to bring forward the accusation and defence of these gentlemen, as they will sufficiently prove that more errors than one have been committed in their attempts, and that these have been the result of a want of intimacy with the literary history of Shakspeare’s age.

In the twenty-sixth volume (p. 120) of the *Monthly Magazine*, a correspondent whose signature is Y. Z., after commenting on Heywood’s letter, as quoted by Dr. Farmer, and after transcribing the very passage just given above, declares this “passage contains an heavy charge against Shakspeare: it accuses him, not only of an attempt to impose on the public, but on his patron, Lord Southampton, to whom he dedicated his ‘unpolisht lines;’” and in his reply to Mr. Lofft, (p. 523) he again remarks,—“The translations in question were certainly published in Shakspeare’s name, and with his permission; they were also dedicated by him to his best and kindest friend.”

Now, that the passage in debate contains no charge against Shakspeare is, we think, perfectly demonstrable from the import of Heywood’s epistle, which we have given at full length, and which, we suspect, Y. Z. has only partially seen, through the medium of Dr. Farmer’s quotation.

That the poet imposed upon his patron by dedicating to him his ‘unpolisht

lines," meaning these versions from Ovid, is an assertion totally contrary to the fact. Of his poems Shakspeare dedicated only two to Lord Southampton, which were published separately, the *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and the *Rape of Lucrece* in 1594, and the expression "unpolisht lines" alludes exclusively to the first of these productions.

So far from any permission being given by Shakspeare for the insertion of these translations, we find him highly offended with Jaggard for presuming to introduce them under his name; and from the admission of these pieces and Marlowe's poem, we may securely infer that the three editions by Jaggard of the *Passionate Pilgrim* were surreptitious and void of all authority. Such, indeed, seems to have been the opinion of his contemporaries with regard to the first impression; for the two poems in Jaggard's collection of 1599, commencing "My flocks feed not," and "As it fell upon a day," are inscribed to Shakspeare, while in England's *Helicon* of 1600 they bear the subscription of "Ignoto," a pretty plain intimation of all want of reliance on the editorial sagacity of this unprincipled bookseller.

Justice requires of us to state that Y. Z. has not brought forward this accusation from any enmity to the poet, of whom, on the contrary, he professes himself to be an ardent admirer; but with the hope of seeing the transaction cleared up to the honour of his favourite bard, a hope which Mr. Lofft, in a subsequent number of the *Magazine*, generously comes forward to gratify.

In doing this, however, he has unfortunately taken for granted the data on which Y. Z. has founded his charge, and builds his defence of the poet on the ill-grounded supposition of his being the real translator of the *Epistles of Ovid*, treating the question as if it were the subject of a trial at law. The consequence has been a somewhat singular series of mistakes. "It appears," observes Mr. Lofft, "that among his undisputed poems, these translations were published by Jaggard, in 1609." Here are two assumptions, of which one seems founded on a surmise in the first communication of Y. Z., who says, "if my memory does not deceive me, the Poems of Shakspeare appeared in 1609." That an edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* was printed between the years 1599 and 1612 is certain, for the copy of 1612 is expressly termed the third edition; but that this impression took place in 1609, is a conclusion without any authority, for, as we have remarked before, no copy of this date has yet been discovered. Granting, however, that it did issue in this year, there is every reason, from the detail already given, to affirm, that it could not contain the translations in question, and was probably nothing more than a re-impression of the edition of 1599.

"In the same year" (that is 1609), proceeds Mr. L., "Heywood makes his claim." Heywood made no claim until 1612; yet, continues Mr. L., this he does in a book entitled '*Britain's Glory*,' published by the very same Jaggard." Now Heywood wrote no book entitled "*Britain's Glory*," an assertion which seems to be verified by Mr. Lofft himself, who commences the next paragraph but one in the following terms:—"This *Britain's Troy*, in which he advances his claim to these translations, seems to have been the earliest of the many volumes which he published," a sentence which almost compels us to consider the title "*Britain's Glory*," in the preceding paragraph, as a typographical error; but it is remarkable that neither in *Britain's Troy* is this claim advanced, nor was it by many instances the earliest of his publications, a reference to the *Biographia Dramatica* exhibiting not less than five of his productions anterior to 1609.

These inaccuracies in the charge and defence of Shakspeare, the detection of which has proved an unpleasant task, and peculiarly so when we reflect, that to one of the parties and to his family the venerable bard owes many obligations, will induce us to rely with greater confidence on the simple truth, as developed in the letter of Heywood,—that Shakspeare, as soon as he was made acquainted with the fraudulent attempt of Jaggard, expressed the warmest indignation at his conduct.

On the poetical merit of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, it will not be necessary to say much; for, as the best and greater part of it consists of pieces in the sonnet form, and these are but few, the skill of the bard in this difficult species of composition will more properly be discussed when we come to consider the value of the large collection which he has bequeathed us under the appellation of "*Sonnets*." One, however, of the pieces which form the *Passionate Pilgrim*, we shall extract, not only for its beauty as a sonnet, though this be considerable, but as it makes mention of his great poetical contemporary, Edmund Spenser, for whose genius, as might naturally be expected, he appears to have entertained the most deep-felt admiration:—

" If music and sweet poetry agree, As they must needs, the sister and the brother, Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me, Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other. Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch Upon the lute doth ravish human sense; Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such,	As passing all conceit, needs no defence. Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound, That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes; And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd, When as himself to singing he betakes, One god is god of both, as poets feign; One knight loves both, and both in thee remain."
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The expression, deep conceit, "seems to allude," remarks Mr. Malone, "to the '*Faery Queen*.' If so, these sonnets were not written till after 1590, when the first three books of that poem were published;" a conjecture which is strongly corroborated by two lines from Barnefield's "*Remembrance of some English Poets*," where the phrase is directly applied to the *Faery Queen*:

" Live Spenser! ever, in thy Faery Queene;
Whose like (for *deep conceit*) was never seene."

The remaining portion of Shakspeare's Poems includes the "*Sonnets*" and "*A Lover's Complaint*," which were printed together in 1609.* At what period they were written, or in what year of the poet's life they were commenced, has been a subject of much controversy. That some of these sonnets were alluded to by Meres in 1598, when he speaks of our author's "*sugred Sonnets among his private friends*," and that a few of these very sonnets, as many, at least, as Jaggard could obtain, were published by him the following year, in consequence of this notice, appears to be highly probable; but that the entire collection, as published in 1609, had been in private circulation anterior to Meres's pamphlet, is a position not easily to be credited, and contrary, indeed, to the internal evidence of the poems themselves, which bear no trilling testimony of having been written at various and even distant periods; and there is reason to think in the space elapsing between the years 1592 and 1609, between the twenty-eighth and forty-fifth year of the poet's age.

That some of them were early compositions, and produced before the author had acquired any extended reputation, may be inferred from the subsequent passages. In the sixteenth sonnet, with reference to his own poetry, he adopts the expression "*my pupil pen*;" and in the thirty-second he petitions his mistress to "*vouchsafe*" him "*but this loving thought*,"

" Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought
'To march in ranks of better equipage."

A small portion of the fame and property which he afterwards enjoyed, could have fallen to his share when he composed the thirty-seventh sonnet, the purport of which is to declare, that though

— "*made lame by fortune's dearest spite*,"

he is rich in the perfections of his mistress, and having engrafted his love to her abundant store, he adds,

* "*Shakspeare's Sonnets*, never before imprinted, quarto, 1609, G. Eld, for T. T."

"So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd."

There is much reason to conclude, however, that by far the greater part of these sonnets was written after the bard had passed the meridian of his life, and during the ten years which preceded their publication; consequently, that with the exception of a few of earlier date, they were the amusement of his leisure from his thirty-fifth to his forty-fifth year. We have been led to this result from the numerous allusions which the author has made, in these poems, to the effects of time on his person; and though these may be, and are without doubt, exaggerated, yet they are fully adequate to prove that the writer could no longer be accounted young. It is remarkable that the hundred and thirty-eighth sonnet, which was originally printed in the "Passionate Pilgrim," contains a notice of this kind:—

"Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best;"

an expression which well accords with the poet's *then* period of life; for when Jaggard surreptitiously published the minor collection, Shakspeare was thirty-five years old.

Among the allusions of this nature in his "Sonnets," the selection of a few will answer our purpose. The first occurs in the twenty-second sonnet:—

"My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date."

The two next are still more explicit:

"But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
'Bated and chopp'd with tan'd antiquity:" Son. 62.

"Against my love shall be, as I am now,
With time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn:" Son. 63.

and the last that we shall give completes the picture, which though overcharged in its colouring, must be allowed, we think, to reflect some lineaments of the truth:—

"That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
As after sun-set fadeth in the west —
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie." Son. 73.

The comparison instituted in these lines between the bare ruined choir of a cathedral, and an avenue at the close of autumn, has given origin to a short but very elegantly written note from the pen of Mr. Steevens. "This image," he remarks, "was probably suggested to Shakspeare by our desolated monasteries. The resemblance between the vaulting of a Gothic aisle, and an avenue of trees whose upper branches meet and form an arch over-head is too striking not to be acknowledged. When the roof of the one is shattered, and the boughs of the other leafless, the comparison becomes yet more solemn and picturesque."

On the principal writers of this minor but difficult species of lyric poetry, to which Shakspeare could have recourse in his own language, it will be necessary to enter into some brief criticism, in order to ascertain the progress and merit of his predecessors, and the models on which he may be conceived to have more peculiarly founded his own practice.

The rapid introduction of Italian poetry into our country, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, very early brought with it a taste for the cultivation of the sonnet. Before 1540, Wyatt had written all his poems, many of which are sonnets constructed nearly on the strictest form of the Italian model; the octant, or major

system being perfectly correct, while the sextant, or minor system, differs only from the legitimate type by closing with a couplet. The poetical value of these attempts, however, does not, either in versification or imagery, transcend mediocrity, and are greatly inferior to the productions, in the same department, of his accomplished friend, the gallant but unfortunate Surrey. The sonnets of this elegantly romantic character, which were published in 1557, deviate still further from the Italian structure, as they uniformly consist of three quatrains in alternate or elegiac verse, and these terminated by a couplet; a secession from the laws of legitimacy which is amply atoned for by virtues of a far superior order, by simplicity, purity, and sweetness of expression, by unaffected tenderness of sentiment, and by vivid powers of description. To this unexaggerated encomium we must add, that the harmony of his metre is often truly astonishing, and even, in some instances, fully equal to the rhythm of the present age.

Of the sonnets of Watson, which were published about 1581, we have given an opinion, at some length, in the preceding chapter, and shall merely add here, that neither in their structure, nor in their diction or imagery, could they be, or were they, models for our author; and are indeed greatly inferior, not only to the sonnets of Shakspeare, but to those of almost every other poet of his day.

The sonnets of Sidney, which appeared in 1591 under the title of "*Astrophel and Stella*," exhibit a variety of metrical arrangement; a few which rival, and several which nearly approach, the most strict Petrarchan form. The octant in Sidney is often perfectly correct, while the sextant presents us with the structure which, though not very common in Italian, has been, since his time, adopted more frequently than any other by our own poets; that is, where the first line and the third, the second and fourth, the fifth and sixth, rhyme together; with this difference, however, that the moderns, in their division of the sextant, have more usually followed the example of Surrey just quoted, in forming their minor system of a quatrain and a couplet, while Sidney more correctly distributes it into *terzette*.

On this arrangement is by far the greater portion of Sidney's sonnets constructed; but the most pleasing of his metrical forms, and which has the merit too of being built after the Italian cast, consists in the Octant, of two tetrachords of disjunct alternate rhyme, the last line of the first stanza rhyming to the first of the second; and in the Sextant, of a structure in which the first and second, the fourth and fifth, and the third and sixth verses rhyme. Thus has he formed the following exquisite sonnet, which will afford no inaccurate idea of his powers in this province of the art:—

" O kisse, which doest those ruddie gemmes impart,
Or gemmes, or fruits of new-found Paradise,
Breathing all blisse and sweetning to the heart,
Teaching dumbe lips a nobler exercise.

O kisse, which soules, even soules, together tyes
By linkes of Love, and only Nature's art:
How faine would I paint thee to all men's eyes,
Or of thy gifts at least shade out some part.

But she forbids: with blushing words, she sayes,
She builds her fame on higher-seated praise:
But my heart burnes, I cannot silent be.

Then since, deare life, you faine would have me peace,
And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease,
Stop you my mouth with still still kissing me."

Son. 81.

In 1592, Daniel produced his "*Delia*," including fifty-seven sonnets, of which only two follow the Italian standard; the remainder consisting of three elegiac stanzas and a closing couplet. They display many beauties, and being a model of easy imitation, have met with numerous copyists

Of the “Diana” of Constable, a collection of sonnets in eight decades, we have already, if we consider their mediocrity, given a sufficiently copious notice. They were published in 1594, and were soon eclipsed by the “Amoretti” of Spenser, a series of eighty-eight sonnets, printed about the year 1595. These, from the singularity of their construction, which not only deviates from the Italian costume, but has seldom found an imitator, require, independent of their poetic value, peculiar notice. The Spenserian sonnet, then, consists of three tetrachords in alternate rhyme; the last line of the first tetrachord rhyming to the first of the second, and the last of the second to the first of the third, and the whole terminated by a couplet. That this system of rhythm often flows sweetly, and that it is often the vehicle of chaste sentiment and beautiful imagery must, in justice, be conceded to this amiable poet; but, at the same time, it is necessary to add, that it is occasionally the medium of quaintness and far-fetched conceit. A specimen, however, shall be subjoined, of which, if the first stanza be slightly tainted with affectation, the remainder will be pronounced, as well in melody and simplicity as in moral beauty, nearly perfect.

“ The doubt which ye misdeeme, fayre Love, is vaine,
That fondly feare to lose your liberty;
When, losing one, two liberties ye gaine,
And make him bond that bondage earst did fly.
Sweet be the bands, the which true Love doth tye
Without constraynt, or dread of any ill:
The gentle birde feeles no captivity
Within her cage; but sings, and feeds her fill.
There Pride dare not approach, nor Discord spill
The league twixt them, that loyal Love hath bound:
But simple Truth, and mutual Good-will,
Seeks, with sweet Peace, to salve each others wound:
There Faith doth fearless dwell in brazen towre,
And spotlesse Pleasure builds her sacred bowre.”— *Son. 65.*

Between the sonnets of Spenser and those of Drayton, a period of ten or eleven years, many minor bards, such as Percy, Barnes, Barnefelde, Griffin, Smith, etc. the titles of whose works will be found in the table of our preceding chapter, were induced to cultivate, and sometimes with tolerable success, this difficult little poem; nor are there wanting, during this period, some elegant examples of the sonnet interspersed through the works of writers of a higher rank, as, for instance, Googe, Gascoigne, Raleigh, Breton, and Lodge; but we shall close this criticism with a few remarks on the sonnets of the once popular poet whose productions of this kind immediately preceded the collection of Shakspeare in 1609.

The sonnets of Drayton which, in number sixty-three, were published under the title of “Ideas,” in 1605, 8vo, are, for the most part, written on the plan of Daniel. Fifty-two exhibit three four-lined stanzas, in alternate rhyme, completed by a couplet; and eleven consist of three quatrains with two verses of immediate, interposed between two verses of disjunct rhyme, and a terminating couplet. The versification of Drayton in these pieces is sufficiently smooth, and the sentiment is sometimes natural and pleasing, though too often injured by an ill-judged display of wit and point. With the exception, also, of two sonnets addressed to the River Anker, they possess little of what can be termed descriptive poetry.

It now remains to ascertain to which of these writers of the sonnet Shakspeare chiefly directed his attention, in choosing a model for his own compositions. Dr. Sewell and Mr. Chalmers contend that, in emulation of Spenser, he took the “Amoretti” of that poet for his guide; but though we admit that he was an avowed admirer of the Faery Queen, and that the publication of the Amoretti in 1595 might still further strengthen his attachment to this species of lyric poesy, yet we cannot accede to their position. The structure, indeed, of the Spenserian sonnet is, with the exception of a closing couplet, totally different from Shakspeare’s; nor are their style and diction less dissimilar.

If we revert, however, to the sonnets of Daniel, which were published in 1592, we shall there find, as Mr. Malone had previously remarked, the prototype of Shakspeare's amatory verse. Indeed no doubt can arise, when we recollect, that all Daniel's sonnets, save two, are composed of three quatrains in alternate rhyme and a couplet, and that all Shakspeare's, one hundred and fifty-four in number, are, if we except a single instance,* of a similar description. There is, also, in Daniel, much of that tissue of abstract thought, and that reiteration of words, which so remarkably distinguish the sonnets of our bard.

There is reason to suppose that none of Shakspeare's sonnets were written before the appearance of Daniel's "Delia." A few in the *Passionate Pilgrim* seem, as hath been observed, to have been suggested during the composition of the *Venus and Adonis*, and were probably penned in the interval elapsing between the publication of the *Delia* in 1592, and of the *Venus and Adonis* in 1593; for, though the earliest of his sonnets, they are still cast in the very mould which Daniel had constructed.

The difficulties, however, which attend the ascertainment of Shakspeare's model in these compositions, are nothing when compared to those which surround the enquiry as to the person to whom they are addressed. An almost impenetrable darkness rests on the question, and no effort has hitherto, in the smallest degree, tended to disperse the gloom.

When Thomas Thorpe published our author's sonnets in 1609, he accompanied them with the following mysterious dedication:—

"To the Only Begetter
Of These Ensuing Sonnets,
Mr. W. H.
All Happiness
And That Eternity Promised
By Our Ever-Living Poet
Wisheth The
Well-Wishing Adventurer
In Setting Forth, T. T.

On the first perusal of this address, the import would seem to be, that Mr. W. H. had been the sole object of Shakspeare's poetry, and of the eternity promised by the bard. But a little attention to the language of the times in which it was written, will induce us to correct this conclusion; for as a part of our author's sonnets is most certainly addressed to a female, it is evident that W. H. could not be the only begetter of them in the sense which primarily suggests itself. For the true meaning of the word we are indebted to Mr. Chalmers, who observes, on the authority of Minsheu's Dictionary of 1616, that one sense of the verb to beget is there given to bring forth.

"W. H., he continues, "was the bringer forth of the Sonnets. *Beget* is derived by Skinner from the A. S. *begettan*, *obtinere*. Johnson adopts this derivation, and sense: so that *begetter*, in the quaint language of Thorpe, the Bookseller, Pistol, the ancient, and such affected persons, signified the *obtainer*; as to *get*, and *getter*, in the present day, means *obtain* and *obtainer*, or to procure, and the procurer."

We must infer, therefore, from this explanation of the word, that Mr. W. H. had influence enough to obtain the manuscript from the poet, and that he lodged it in Thorpe's hands for the purpose of publication, a favour which the bookseller returned, by wishing him all happiness, and that eternity which had been promised by the bard, in such glowing colours, to another, namely, to one of the immediate subjects of his sonnets.

That this is the only rational meaning which can be annexed to the word "promised," will appear, when we reflect that for Thorpe to have wished W.

* Sonnet 126. It should be observed, however, that Sonnet 145, though in alternate verse, and terminated by a couplet, is in the octo-syllable measure.

H. the eternity which had been promised him by an ever-living poet, would have been not only superfluous, but downright nonsense: the eternity of an ever-living poet must necessarily ensue, and was a proper subject of congratulation, but not of wishing or of hope.

It appears also that this dedication was understood in the same light by some of the earlier editors of the sonnets. Cotes, it is true, republished them in 1640 without a commentary; but when Gildon re-printed them in 1710, he gives it as his opinion that they were "all of them in praise of his mistress;" and Dr. Sewell, when he edited them in 1728, had embraced a similar idea, for he tells us, in reference to our author's example, that "A young muse must have a *mistress*, to play off the beginning of fancy; nothing being so apt to elevate the soul to a pitch of poetry, as the passion of love."

The conclusion of these editors remained undisputed for more than half a century, when Mr. Malone, in 1780, published his Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays of 1778, which includes the Sonnets of the poet, accompanied by his own notes, and those of his friends. Here, beside the opinion which he has himself avowed, he has given the conjectures of Dr. Farmer, and Mr. Tyrwhitt, and the decision of Mr. Steevens.

All these gentlemen concur in believing, that more than one hundred of our author's sonnets are addressed to a male object. Dr. Farmer, influenced by the initials in the dedication, supposes, that Mr. William Harte, the poet's nephew, was the object in question; but a reference to the Stratford Register completely overturns this hypothesis, for it there appears, that William, eldest son of William Harte, who married Shakspeare's Sister Joan, was baptized August 28th, 1600, and consequently could not be even in existence when the greater part of these compositions were written.

Mr. Tyrwhitt, founding his conjecture on a line in the twentieth sonnet, which is thus printed in the old copy,

"A man in *hew* all *Hews* in his controlling,"

conceives that the letters W. H. were intended to imply William Hughes. If we recollect, however, our bard's uncontrollable passion for playing upon words; that *hew* frequently meant, in the usage of his time, mien and appearance, as well as tint, and that Daniel, who was probably his archetype in these pieces, has spelt it in the same way, and once, if not oftener, for the sake of emphasis, with a capital, we shall not feel inclined to place such reliance on this supposition.

When Mr. Steevens, in 1766, annexed a reprint of the sonnets to Shakspeare's plays, from the quarto editions, he hazarded no observations on their scope or origin; but in Malone's Supplement (vol. i, p. 596), he ventured, in a note on the twentieth sonnet, to declare his conviction that it was addressed to a male object.

Lastly, Mr. Malone, in the Supplement just mentioned (vol. i. p. 579), after specifying his concurrence in the conjecture of Mr. Tyrwhitt, adds—"To this person, whoever he was, one hundred and twenty of the following poems are addressed; the remaining twenty-eight are addressed to a lady."

Thus the matter rested on the decision of these four celebrated commentators, who were uniform in asserting their belief, that Shakspeare had addressed the greater part of his sonnets to a man, when Mr. George Chalmers, in 1799, in his "Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers," attempted to overturn their conclusion, by endeavouring to prove that the whole of the Sonnets had been addressed by Shakspeare to Queen Elizabeth; a position which he labours to strengthen, by additional research, in his "Supplemental Apology" of 1799!

That Mr. Chalmers, however, notwithstanding all his industry and ingenuity, has failed in establishing his point, must be the acknowledgment of every one who has perused the sonnets with attention. Indeed the phraseology of Shakspeare so positively indicates a *male object*, that, if it cannot, in this respect, be reposed on,

we may venture to assert, that no language, however explicit, is entitled to confidence. Nothing but extreme carelessness could have induced Gildon and Sewall to conceive that the prior part of these sonnets was directed to *a female*, and even Mr. Chalmers himself is compelled to convert his Queen into *a man*, before he can give any plausibility to his hypothesis. That Elizabeth, in her capacity of a sovereign, was frequently addressed in language strictly applicable to the *male* sex, is very true, and such has been the custom to almost every female *sovereign*; but that she should be thus metamorphosed, for the express purpose of wooing her by amatory sonnets, is a position which cannot be expected to obtain credit.

The question then returns upon us, To whom are these sonnets addressed? We agree with Farmer, Tyrwhitt, Steevens, and Malone, in thinking the object of the greater part of the sonnets to have been of the male sex; but, for the reasons already assigned, we cannot concede that either Harte or Hughes was the individual.

If we may be allowed, in our turn, to conjecture, we would fix upon Lord Southampton as the subject of Shakspeare's sonnets, from the first to the hundredth and twenty-sixth, inclusive.

Before we enter, however, on the quotation of such passages as are calculated to give probability to our conclusion, it will be necessary to show that, in the age of Shakspeare, the language of love and friendship was mutually convertible. The terms lover and love, indeed, were as often applied to those of the same sex who had an esteem for each other, as they are now exclusively directed to express the love of the male for the female. Thus, for instance, Ben Johnson subscribes himself the lover of Camden, and tells Dr. Donne, at the close of a letter to him, that he is his "ever true lover;" and with the same import, Drayton, in a letter to Drummond of Hawthornden, informs him, that Mr. Joseph Davis is in *love* with him. Shakspeare, in his Dramas, frequently adopts the same phraseology in expressing the relations of friendship: Portia, for example, in the Merchant of Venice, speaking of Antonio, says,

————— "this Antonio,
Being the bosom lover of my lord:

and in Coriolanus, Menenius exclaims,

————— "I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover:"

but it is to his poems that we must refer for a complete and extensive proof of this perplexing ambiguity of diction, which will gradually unfold itself as we proceed to quote instances in support of Lord Southampton's being the subject of his muse.

That Shakpeare was, at the same time, attached by friendship, and by love; that, according to the fashion of his age, he employed the same epithet for both, though, in one instance, at least, he has accurately distinguished the sexes, positively appears from the opening stanza of a sonnet in the *Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599:—

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The *better angel* is a *man* right fair,
The *worser spirit* a *woman*, colour'd ill."

That this better angel was Lord Southampton, and that to him was addressed the number of sonnets mentioned above, we shall now endeavour to substantiate.

Perhaps one of the most striking proofs of this position, is the hitherto unnoticed fact, that the language of the Dedication to the Rape of Lucrece, and that of part of the twenty-sixth sonnet, are almost precisely the same.

The Dedication runs thus:—"The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end;—The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours,

what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would shew greater."

The sonnet is as follows:

"*Lord of my love*, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit,
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it."

Here, in the first place, it may be observed, that in his prose, as well as in his verse, our author uses the same amatory language; for he opens the dedication to His Lordship with the assurance that "his love for him is without end." In correspondence with this declaration, the sonnet commences with this remarkable expression, — "*Lord of my love*;" while the residue tells us, in exact conformity with the prose address, his high sense of His Lordship's merit and his own unworthiness.

That no doubt may remain of the meaning and direction of this phraseology, we shall bring forward a few lines from the 110th sonnet, which uniting the language of both the passages just quoted, most incontrovertibly designate the sex, and, at the same time, we think, the individual to whom they are addressed: —

————— "My best of love,
Now all is done, save what shall have no end:
Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A God in love, to whom I am confin'd."

Before we proceed any further, however, it may be necessary to obviate an objection to our hypothesis which must immediately suggest itself. It will be said, that the first *seventeen* sonnets are written for the sole purpose of persuading their object to marry, and how could this exhortation be applicable to Lord Southampton, who, from the year 1594 to the year 1599, was the devoted admirer of the fair Mrs. Varnon?

To remove this apparent incongruity, we have only to recollect, that His Lordship's attachment to his mistress met with the most decided and relentless opposition from the Queen; and there is every reason to infer, from the voluntary absences of the Earl in the years 1597 and 1598, and the extreme distress of his mistress on these occasions, that the connection had been twice given up, on his part, in deference to the will of his capricious sovereign.

Shakspeare, when his friend at the age of twenty-one was first smitten with the charms of Elizabeth Vernon, was high in His Lordship's confidence and favour, as the dedication of his *Lucrece*, at this period, fully evinces. We also know, that the Earl was very indignant at the interference of the Queen; that he very reluctantly submitted for some years to her cruel restrictions in this affair; and if, in conformity with his constitutional irritability of temper, and the natural impulse of passion on such a subject, we merely admit, his having declared what every lover would be tempted to utter on the occasion, that if he could not marry the object of his choice, he would die single," a complete key will be given to what has hitherto proved inexplicable.

It immediately, indeed, and most satisfactorily accounts for four circumstances, not to be explained on any other plan. It affords, in the first place, an easy and natural clue to the poet's expostulatory language, who, being ardently attached to his patron, wished, of course, to see him happy either in the possession of his first choice or in the arms of a second, and, therefore, reprobates, in strong terms, such a premature vow of celibacy: it gives in the second place, an adequate solution of the question, why so few as only seventeen sonnets, and these the earliest in the collection, are employed to enforce the argument? for when His Lordship, on his return to London from the Continent in 1598, embraced the resolution of

marrying his mistress, notwithstanding the continued opposition of the Queen, all ground for further expostulation was instantly withdrawn. These seventeen sonnets, therefore, were written between the years 1594 and 1598, and were consequently among those noticed by Meres in 1598, as in private circulation: in the third place, it assigns a sufficient motive for withholding from public view, until after the death of the Queen, a collection of which part was written to counteract her known wishes, by exciting the Earl to form an early and independent choice: and in the fourth place, it furnishes a cogent reason why Jaggard, in his surreptitious edition of the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, did not dare to publish any of these sonnets, at a time when Southampton and his lady were imprisoned by the enraged Elizabeth, as a punishment for their clandestine union.

Having thus, satisfactorily as we think, not only removed the objection but strikingly corroborated the argument through the medium of our defence, we shall select a few passages from these initiatory sonnets in order still further to show the masculine nature of their object, and to give a specimen of the poet's expostulatory freedom:—

“ ——— Where is *she so fair*, whose *un-ear'd womb*
Disdains the *tillage of thy husbandry*?
Or who is *he so fond*, will be the tomb
Of *his self-love*, to stop posterity.”

Sonnet 3.

“ ——— thou — — — — —
Unlook'd on diest, unless thou *get a son*.”

Son. 7.

“ The world will be *thy widow* and still weep—
No love toward others in that bosom sits,
That on *himself* such murderous shame commits.”

Son. 9.

“ — — — — — Dear my love, you know,
You had a *father*; let your son say so.”

Son. 13.

“ Now stand you on the top of happy hours;
And many *maiden* garlands yet unset,
With virtuous wish *would bear you living flowers*.”

Son. 16.

If more instances were wanting to prove that Shakspeare's object was a male friend, a multitude might be quoted from the remaining sonnets; we shall content ourselves, however, with adding a few to those already given from the first seventeen:—

“ O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted do allow,
For beauty's *pattern to succeeding men*.”

Son. 19.

“ *His* beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and *he* in them still green.”

Son. 63.

The reference to sonnet 67 will spare further quotation, as it must prove, against all the efforts of sophistry, the sex for which we contend.

The subsequent sonnets, likewise, as far as the hundred and twenty-seventh, which appear to have been written at various periods anterior to 1609, not only bear the strongest additional testimony to the masculinity of the person addressed, but in several instances clearly evince the nature of the affection borne to him, which without any doubt consisted solely of ardent friendship and intellectual adoration. Two entire sonnets (the 31st and the 74th), indeed, are dedicated to the expression of these sentiments, in the first of which he tells his noble patron, that he had absorbed in his own person all the friendship which he (Shakspeare) had ever borne to the living or the dead, and he finely terms this attachment “religious love.”

That Shakspeare looked up to his friend not only with admiration and gratitude,

but with reverence and homage and, consequently, that neither William Harte nor William Hughes, nor any person of his own rank in society could be the subject of his verse, must be evident from the passages already adduced, and will be still more so, when we weigh the import of the following extracts.

We are told, in the seventy-eighth sonnet, what, indeed, we might have supposed from the Earl's well-known munificence to literary men, that he was the theme of every muse; and it is added, that his patronage gave dignity to learning, and majesty to grace.

In his ninety-first sonnet the poet informs us, that he values the affection of his friend more than riches, birth, or splendour, finishing his eulogium by asserting that he was not his peculiar boast, but the pride of all men:

“Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garment's cost,
Of more delight than hawks or horses be,
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast.”

But in terms the most emphatic and explicit does he point to his object, in the Sonnet 101, distinctly marking the sex, the dignity, the rank, and moral virtue of his friend: to whom can this sonnet, or indeed all the passages which we have cited apply, if not to Lord Southampton, the bosom-friend, the munificent patron of Shakspeare, the noble, the elegant, the brave, the protector of literature and the theme of many a song. And let it be remembered, that if the hundredth and first sonnet be justly ascribed to Lord Southampton, or if any one of the passages which we have adduced, be fairly applicable to him, the whole of the hundred and twenty-six sonnets must necessarily apply to the same individual, for the poet has more than once affirmed this to have been his plan and object:

“Why write I still all one, ever the same—
That every word doth almost tell my name.

Son. 76.

— “all alike my songs, and praises be
To one, of one, still such and ever so.”

Son. 105.

It may be objected, that the opening and closing sonnet of the collection which we conceive to be exclusively devoted to Lord Southampton, admit neither of reconciliation with each other, nor with the hypothesis which we wish to establish. This discrepancy, however, will altogether vanish, if we compare the import of these sonnets with that of two others of the same series.

It will be allowed that the expressions, “the world's fresh ornament,” the “only herald to the gaudy spring,” and the epithets “tender churl,” in the first sonnet, may with great propriety be applied to a young nobleman of twenty-one, just entering on a public and splendid career; but, if it be true, that these sonnets were written at various times, between the years 1594 and 1609, how comes it, that in the hundred and twenty-sixth, the last addressed to his patron, he still uses an equally youthful designation; and terms him “my lovely boy,” an appellation certainly not then adapted to His Lordship, who, in 1609, was in his thirty-sixth year?

That the sonnets were written at different periods, he tells us in an epology to his noble friend for not addressing him so frequently as he used to do at the commencement of their intimacy, assigning as a reason, that as he was now the theme of various other poets, such addresses must have lost their zest.—Vide Sonnet 102.

The mystery arising from the use of the juvenile epithets, he completely clears up in his hundred and eighth sonnet, where he says, that having exhausted every figure to express his patron's merit and his own affection, he is compelled to say the same things over again; that he is determined to consider him as young as when “he first hallowed his fair name;” that friendship, in fact, weighs not the advance of life, but adheres to its first conception, when youth and beauty clothed

the object of its regard. In pursuance of this determination, he calls him, in this very sonnet, "sweet boy."

In conformity with this resolution of considering his friend as endowed whilst he lives with perpetual youth, he closes his sonnets to him, not only with the repetition of the juvenile epithet "boy," but he positively assures him that he has "time in his power," that "he grows by waning," and that "nature, as he goes onward, still plucks him back, in order to disgrace time." The conceit is somewhat puerile, though clearly explanatory of the systematic intention of the poet:—

" O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold *time's* fickle glass, his fickle hour;
Who hast by *waning* grown, and therein show'st
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st;
If *nature*, sovereign mistress over wrack;
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill."

He terminates this sonnet, however, and his series of poetical addresses to Lord Southampton, with a powerful corrective of all flattery, in reminding him that although nature "may detain," she cannot "keep her treasure," and that he must ultimately yield to death:

We must also observe, that the poet has marked the termination of these sonnets to his friend, not only by the solemn nature of the concluding sentiment, but by a striking deviation from the customary form of his composition in these pieces; the closing poem not being constructed with alternate rhymes, but consisting of six couplets!

After thus attempting, at considerable length, and we trust with some success, to solve a mystery hitherto deemed inexplicable, we shall offer but a few observations on the object of the remaining twenty-eight sonnets.

In the first place, it is not true, as Mr. Malone has asserted, that they are *all* addressed to a female. Two, at least, have not the slightest reference to any individual; the hundred and twenty-ninth sonnet being a general and moral declamation on the misery resulting from sensual love, and the hundred and forty-sixth, an address to his own soul of a somewhat severe and religious cast.

Of the residue, four have no very determinate application, and to whom the twenty-two are dedicated, is not now to be ascertained, and, if it were, not worth the enquiry; for, a more worthless character, or described as such in stronger terms, no poet ever drew. We much wish, indeed, these sonnets had never been published, or that their subject could be proved to have been perfectly ideal. We are the more willing to consider them in this light, since, if we dismiss these confessional sonnets, not the slightest moral stain can rest on the character of Shakspeare; as the frolic in Sir Thomas Lucy's park, from his youth, and the circumstances attending it, must be deemed altogether venial. It is very improbable, also, that any poet should publish such an open confession of his own culpability.

Of the grossly meretricious conduct of his mistress, of whose personal charms and accomplishments we know nothing more than that she had black eyes, black hair, and could play on the virginal, Sonnets 137, 142, and 144, bear the most indubitable evidence. Well, therefore, might the poet term her his "false plague," his "worser spirit," his "female evil," and his "bad angel;" well might he tell her, notwithstanding the colour of her eyes and hair,

" Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place;
In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds."

Son. 131.

" For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night."

Son. 147.

Well might he blame his pliability of temper, his insufficiency of judgment and

resolution, well might he call himself "past cure," and "frantic-mad," when, addressing this profligate woman, he exclaims,

" Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
That in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
O, though I love what others do abhor,
With others thou should'st not abhor my state;
If thy unworthiness rais'd love in me,
More worthy I to be belov'd by thee." *

Son. 150.

Now, weighing, what almost every other personal event in our author's life establishes, the general and moral beauty of his character, and reflecting, at the same time, that he was at this period a husband, and the father of a family, we cannot but feel the most entire conviction, that these sonnets were never directed to a real object: but that, notwithstanding they were written in his own person, and two of them, indeed (*Sonnets 135 and 136*), a perpetual pun on his Christian name, they were solely intended to express, aloof from all individual application, the contrarieties, the inconsistencies, and the miseries of illicit love. Credulity itself, we think, cannot suppose otherwise, and, at the same time, believe that the poet was privy to their publication.

To this discussion of a subject clogged with so many difficulties, we shall now subjoin some remarks on the poetical merits and demerits of our author's sonnets; and here, we are irresistibly induced to notice the absurd charge against, and the inadequate defence of, sonnet-writing, brought forward by Messrs. Steevens and Malone, in the Supplement of the latter gentleman.

The antipathy of Mr. Steevens to this species of lyric poetry, seems to have amounted to the highest pitch of extravagance. In a note on the fifty-fourth sonnet, he asks, "What has truth or nature to do with sonnets?" as if truth and nature were confined to any particular metre or mode of composition; and, in a subsequent page, he informs us that the sonnet is "a species of composition which has reduced the most exalted poets to a level with the meanest rhymers; has almost cut down Milton and Shakspeare to the standards of Pomfret and —," but the name of Pomfret is perhaps the lowest in the scale of English versifiers." Nothing can exceed the futility and bad taste of this remark, and yet Mr. Malone has advanced no other defence of the "exalted poets" of Italy than that, "he is slow to believe that Petrarch is without merit;" and for Milton he offers this strange apology,—"that he generally failed when he attempted rhyme, whether his verses assumed the shape of a sonnet, or any other form."

When we recollect, that the noblest poets of Italy, from Dante to Alfieri, have employed their talents in the construction of the sonnet, and that many of their most popular and beautiful passages have been derived through this medium; when we recollect, that the first bards of our own country, from Surrey to Southey, have followed their example with an emulation which has conferred immortality on their efforts; when we further call to mind the exquisite specimens of rhymed poetry which Milton has given us in his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; and when, above all, we retrace the dignity, the simplicity, the moral sublimity of many of his sonnets, perhaps not surpassed by any other part of his works, we stand amazed at the unqualified censure on the one hand, and at the impotency of the defence on the other.

If such be the fate, then, between these commentators, of the general question, and of the one more peculiarly relative to Milton, it cannot be expected that Shak-

* That this series of sonnets, as well as the preceding, should be considered by Mr. Chalmers as addressed to Queen Elizabeth, is, indeed, of all conjectures, the most extraordinary!

speare should meet with milder treatment. In fact, Mr. Steevens has asserted, that his sonnets are "composed in the highest strain of affectation, pedantry, circumlocution, and nonsense;" a picture which Mr. Malone endeavours to soften, by telling us that "it appears to him overcharged:" that similar defects occur in his dramas, and that the sonnets, "if they have no other merit, are entitled to our attention, as often illustrating obscure passages in his plays."

It is true that in the next paragraph he ventures to declare, that he cannot perceive that their versification is less smooth than that of Shakspeare's other compositions, and that he can perceive perspicuity and energy in some of them; but well might Mr. Steevens reply, that "the case of these sonnets is certainly bad, when so little can be advanced in support of them."

Let us try, therefore, if we cannot, and that also with great ease, prove that these sonnets have been not only miserably criticised, but unmercifully abused; and that, in point of poetical merit, they are superior to all those which preceded the era of Drummond.

In the first place, then, we altogether deny that either affectation or pedantry can, in the proper sense of the terms, be applied to the sonnets of Shakspeare. Were any modern, indeed, of the nineteenth century to adopt their language and style, he might justly be taxed with both; but in Sidney and Shakspeare it was habit, indissoluble habit, and not affectation; it was the diction in which they had been practised from early youth to clothe their sentiments and feelings; it was identified with all their associations and intellectual operations; it was the language, in fact, the mode of expression, in a greater or less degree, of all their contemporaries; and to have stripped their thoughts of a dress, which to us appears quaint and artificial, would have been to them a painful and more elaborate task. When once, indeed, we can attribute this artificial, though often emphatic style, as we ought to do, to the universally defective taste of the age in which it sprang, and not to individual usage, we shall be prepared to do justice to injured genius, and to confess, that frequently beneath this laboured phraseology are to be found sentiments simple, natural, and touching. We may also very safely affirm of Shakspeare's sonnets, that, if their style be compared with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, in the same department of poetry, a manifest superiority must often be awarded him, on the score of force, dignity, and simplicity of expression; qualities of which we shall very soon afford the reader some striking instances.

To a certain extent, we must admit the charge of circumlocution, not as applied to individual sonnets, but to the subject on which the whole series is written. The obscurities of this species of poem have almost uniformly arisen from density and compression of style, nor are the compositions of Shakspeare more than usually free from this source of defect; but when it is considered that our author has written one hundred and twenty-six sonnets for the sole purpose of expressing his attachment to his patron, it must necessarily follow, that a subject so continually reiterated, would display no small share of circumlocution. Great ingenuity has been exhibited by the poet in varying his phraseology and ideas; but no effort could possibly obviate the monotony, as the result of such a task.

We shall not condescend to a refutation of the fourth epithet, which, if at all applicable to any portion of Shakspeare's minor poems, can alone apply to Sonnets 135 and 136, which are a continued pun upon his Christian name, a species of trifling which was the peculiar vice of our author's age.

That an attempt to exhaust the subject of friendship; to say all that could be collected on the topic, would almost certainly lead, in the days of Shakspeare, to abstractions too subtle and metaphysical, and to a cast of diction sometimes too artificial and scholastic for modern taste, no person well acquainted with the progress of our literature can deny; but candour will, at the same time, admit, that the expression and versification of his sonnets are often natural, spirited, and harmonious, and that where the surface has been rendered hard and repulsive

by the peculiarities of the period of their production, we have only to search beneath, in order to discover a rich ore of thought, imagery, and sentiment.

It has been stated that Shakspeare's sonnets, consisting of three elegiac quatrains and a couplet, are constructed on the plan of Daniel's; a mode of arrangement which, though bearing no similitude to the elaborate involution of the Petrarchan sonnet, may be praised for the simplicity of its form, and the easy flow of its verse; and that these technical beauties have often been preserved by our bard, and are frequently the medium through which he displays the treasures of a fervent fancy and a feeling heart, we shall now attempt, by a series of extracts, to prove.

The description of the sun in his course, his rising, meridian altitude, and setting, and his influence over the human mind, are enlivened by imagery peculiarly vivid and rich; the seventh and eighth lines especially, contain a picture of a great beauty:—

“ Lo in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage;
But when from high-most pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are
From his low tract, and look another way:
So thou,” &c.

Son. 7.

The inevitable effects of time over every object in physical nature, reminding the poet of the disastrous changes incident to human life, he exclaims in a style highly figurative and picturesque:—

“ When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls, all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make.”

Son. 12.

A still more lovely sketch, illustrative of the uneasiness which he felt in consequence of absence from his friend, is given us in the following passage, of which the third and fourth lines are pre-eminent for the poetry of their diction:—

“ From you have I been absent in the Spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew.”

Son. 98.

To the melody, perspicuity, and spirit of the versification of the next specimen, and to the exquisite turn upon the words, too much praise cannot be given. It is one amongst the numerous evidences of Lord Southampton being the subject of the great bulk of our author's sonnets; for he assures us, that he not only esteemed his lays, but gave argument and skill to his pen:—

“ Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
Dark'ning thy power, to lend base subjects light?”

Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
In gentle numbers time so idly spent;
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
And gives thy pen both skill and argument."

Son. 100.

From the expressions "old rhyme," and "antique pen," in the extract which we are about to quote, it is highly probable that our bard alluded to Chaucer, certainly before his own appearance the greatest poet that England had produced. The chivalric picture in the first quatrain, is peculiarly interesting, and the cadence of the metre is harmony itself:—

"When, in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights;
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now."

Son. 106.

It is a striking proof of the poetical inferiority of the few sonnets which Shakspeare has addressed to his mistress, that we find it difficult to select more than one passage from them which does honour to his memory. Of this, however, it will be allowed, that the comparison is happy, the rhythm pleasing, and the expression clear:—

"And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even,
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face."

Son. 132.

In order, however, to judge satisfactorily of the merit of these poems, it will, no doubt, be deemed necessary by the reader, that a few *entire* sonnets be presented to his notice; for, though the passages just quoted, as well as numerous others which might be given, have a decided claim upon our approbation, yet, the sonnet being a very brief composition, it will, of course, be required, that all its parts be perfect, and of equal value. That this is not always the case with these productions of our author, will be inferred from the short extracts which we have selected; but that it is so in very many instances may truly be affirmed, and will, indeed, be proved by citation.

So far from affectation and pedantry being the general characteristic of these pieces, impartial criticism must declare, that more frequent examples of simple, clear, and nervous diction are to be culled from them, than can be found among the sonnets of any of his contemporaries. The 71st sonnet may be taken, not as a solitary proof, but as the exemplar of a numerous class of Shakspearean sonnets; and with the remark, that neither in this instance, nor in many others, is there, either in versification, language, or thought, the smallest deviation into the regions of affectation or conceit.

Simplicity of style, and tenderness of sentiment, form the sole features of this sonnet; but in the 116th, with an equal chastity of diction, are combined more energy and dignity, together with the infusion of some noble and appropriate imagery. It must also be added, that the flow and structure of the verse are singularly pleasing.

Of a lighter though more glowing cast of poetry, both in expression and imagination, but with a slight blemish, arising from the pharmaceutical allusion in the last line, is the 54th sonnet. A trifling inaccuracy with respect to the colour of the cynorhodon, or canker-rose, afforded Mr. Steevens a pretext for the spleetic interrogation which has been recorded by us with due censure. It is somewhat strange that the beauties of the poem could not disarm the prejudices of the critic.

In spirit, however, in elegance, in the skill and texture of its modulation, and beyond all, in the dignified and highly poetical close of the third quatrain, no one of our author's sonnets excels the twenty-ninth. The ascent of the lark was a favourite subject of contemplation with the poet.

It is, time, however, to terminate these citations, which have been already sufficiently numerous to enable the reader to form an estimate of the poet's merit in the difficult task of sonnet-writing. That many more might be brought forward, of equal value with those which we have selected, will be allowed perhaps when we state, that in the specimens of Mr. Ellis, the "Petrarca" of Mr. Henderson, and the "Laura" of Mr. Lofft, eleven have been chosen, of which, we find upon reference, only one among the four just now adduced.

The last production in the minor poems of Shakspeare, is *A LOVER'S COMPLAINT*, in which a forlorn damsel, seduced and deserted, relates the history of her sorrows to

"A reverend man that graz'd his cattle nigh."

It is written in stanzas of seven lines; the first and third, and the second, fourth, and fifth, rhiming to each other, while the sixth and seventh form a couplet; an arrangement exactly similar to the stanza of the Rape of Lucrece. Like many of our author's smaller pieces, it is too full of imagery and allusion, but has several passages of great beauty and force. In the description which this forsaken fair one gives of the person and qualities of her lover, the following lines will be acknowledged to possess considerable excellence:—

"His browny locks did hang in crooked curls,
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls.—

His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongu'd he was, and therefore free;
Yet, if men mov'd him, was he such a storm
As oft 'twixt May and April is to see,
When winds breathe sweet, unruly though they be.—

His real habitude gave life and grace
To appertainings and to ornament."

These, and every other portion of the poem, however, are eclipsed by a subsequent part of the same picture, in which, as Mr. Steevens well remarks, the poet "has accidentally delineated his own character as a dramatist." So applicable, indeed, did the passage appear to us, as a forcible though rapid sketch of the more prominent features of the author's own genius, and of his universal influence over the human mind, that we select it as a motto for this work:—

— "On the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
To make the weeper laugh, the laughter weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will;

That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old; and sexes both enchanted."

The address which the injured mistress puts into the mouth of her seducer, when "he 'gan besiege her," opens in a strain of such beautiful simplicity, that we cannot avoid an expression of regret, that the defective taste of the age prevented its continuance and completion in a similar style of tenderness and ease:—

"Gentle maid,
Have of my suffering youth some feeling pity,
And be not of my holy vows afraid."

After relating, rather too circumstantially, the arts and hypocrisy which had been exercised for her ruin, she bursts into the following exclamation:—

“ O father, what a hell of mischief lies
In the small orb of one particular tear ! ”

Various lines, and brief extracts, of no common merit, might be detached from the Lover's Complaint; but enough has now been said on the Miscellaneous Poetry of Shakspeare, to prove that it possesses a value far beyond what has been attributed to it in modern times. The depreciation, indeed, to which it has been lately subjected, a fate so directly opposed to that which accompanied its first reception in the world, must be ascribed, in a great measure, to the unaccountable prejudices of Mr. Steevens, who, in an Advertisement prefixed to the edition of our author's Dramas, in 1793, has made the following curious declaration:—

“ We have not reprinted the Sonnets, etc., of Shakspeare, because the strongest act of parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service; notwithstanding these miscellaneous poems have derived every possible advantage from the literature and judgment of their only intelligent editor, Mr. Malone, whose implements of criticism, like the ivory rake and golden spade in Prudentius, are on this occasion disgraced by the objects of their culture—had Shakspeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonneteer.”

That Watson was “a much more elegant sonneteer than Shakspeare,” is an assertion which wants no other means for its complete refutation, than a reference to the works of the elder bard. At the period when Mr. Steevens advanced this verdict, such a reference was not within the power of one in a thousand of his readers, but all may now be referred to a very satisfactory article in the “British Bibliographer,” where Sir Egerton Brydges has transcribed seventeen of Watson's sonnets, and declares it to be his conviction, that they “want the moral cast” of Shakspeare's sonnets; “his unsophisticated materials; his pure and natural train of thought.” It may be added, that a more extended comparison would render the inferiority of Watson still further apparent, and that the Bard of Avon would figure from the juxta-position like “Hyperion to a satyr.”

When Mr. Steevens compliments his brother-commentator at the expense of the poet; when he tells us, that “his implements of criticism are on this occasion disgraced by the objects of their culture,” who can avoid feeling a mingled emotion of wonder and disgust? who can, in short, forbear a smile of derision and contempt at the folly of such a declaration?

And lastly, when he assures us, that “the strongest act of parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into the service of our author's Miscellaneous Poetry,” and when, at the same time, we recollect, what gives us pleasure to acknowledge, the wit, the ingenuity, and research of this able editor on almost every other occasion, it will not, we trust, be deemed a work of supererogation, that we have attempted to unfold, at length, the beauties of these calumniated poems, and to refute the sweeping censure which they have so unworthily incurred; nor will the summary inference with which we shall conclude this chapter, be viewed, we hope, as either incorrect, or unauthorised by the previous disquisition, when we state it to consist of the following terms; namely, that the Poems of Shakspeare, although they are chargeable with the faults peculiar to the age in which they sprung, yet exhibit so much originality, invention, and fidelity to nature, such a rich store of moral and philosophic thought, and often such a purity, simplicity, and grace of style, as not only deservedly placed them high in the favour of his contemporaries, but will permanently secure to them no inconsiderable share of the admiration and the gratitude of posterity.*

* That Shakspeare himself entertained a confident hope of the immortality of his minor poems, the following, out of many instances, will sufficiently prove:—

CHAPTER VI.

On the Dress, and Modes of Living, the Manners, and Customs, of the Inhabitants of the Metropolis, during the Age of Shakspeare.

BEFORE we enter on the dramatic career of Shakspeare, a subject which we wish to preserve unbroken, and free from irrelative matter, it will be necessary, in order to prosecute our view of the costume of the Times, to give a picture in this place of the prevalent habits of the metropolis, which, with the sketch already drawn of those peculiar to the country, will form a corresponding, and we trust, an adequate whole.

In no period of our annals, perhaps, has DRESS formed a more curious subject of enquiry, than during the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First. The Queen, who possessed an almost unbounded share of vanity and coquetry, set an example of profusion which was followed through every rank of society, and furnished, by its universality, an inexhaustible theme for the puritanic satirists of the age.

Of the mutability and eccentricity of the dresses both of men and women, during this period, Harrison has provided us with a singular and interesting account, and which, as constituting a very appropriate preface to more minute particulars, we shall here transcribe.

“Such is our mutabilitie, that to daie there is none to the Spanish guise, to-morrow the French toies are most fine and delectable, yer long no such apparell as that which is after the high Alman fashion, by and by the Turkisk maner is generallie best liked of, otherwise the Morisco gowns, the Barbarian sleeves, the mandilion worne to Collie-westen ward, and the short French breeches make such a comelie vesture, that except it were a dog in a doublet, you shall not see anie so disguised, as are my countrie men of England. And as these fashions are diverse, so likewise it is a world to see the costlinesse and the curiositie : the excesse and the vanitie : the pompe and the braverie : the change and the varietie : and finallie the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees : insomuch that nothing is more constant in England than inconstancie of attire. Oh how much cost is bestowed now adaies upon our bodies and how little upon our soules ! how many sutes of apparell hath the one and how little furniture hath the other ? how long time is asked in decking up of the first, and how little space left wherin to feed the later ? how curious, how nice also are a number of men and women, and how hardlie can the tailer please them in making it fit for their bodies ? how manie times must it be sent backe againe to

“ So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.” Son. 18.

“ Yet, do thy worst, old Time : despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.” Son. 19.

“ Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.” Son. 54.

“ Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty’s brow ;
Feeds on the rarities of nature’s truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow :
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.” Son. 60.

—— “ Confounding age ——
—— shall never cut from memory
My sweet love’s beauty, though my lover’s life.
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.” Son. 63.

“ When all the breathers of this world are dead ;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen),
Where breath most breathes,—even in the mouths of men.” Son. 81.

him that made it? what chafing, what fretting, what reprochfull language doth the poore work-man beare awaie? and manie times when he dooth nothing to it at all, yet when it is brought home againe it is verie fit and handsome; then must we put it on, then must the long seames of our hose be set by a plumb-line, then we puffle, then we blow, and finallie sweat till we drop, that our clothes may stand upon us. I will saie nothing of our heads, which sometimes are polled, sometimes curled, or suffered to grow at length like woman's lockes, manie times cut off above or under the ears round as by a wooden dish. Neither will I meddle with our varietie of beards, of which some are shaven from the chin like those of Turks, not a few cut short like to the beard of marques Otto, some made round like a rubbing brush, other with a pique devant (O fine fashion) or now and then suffered to grow long, the barbers being growen to be so cunning in this behalfe as the tailers. And therefore if a man have a leane and streight face, a marquesse Ottons cut will make it broad and large; if it be platter like, a long slender beard will make it seeme the narrower; if he be wesell beaked, then much heare left on the cheekes will make the owner looke big like a bowdled hen, and so grim as a goose, if Cornelius of Chalmeresford saie true: manie old men doo weare no beards at all. Some lustie courtiers also and gentlemen of courage, doo weare either rings of gold, stones, or pearle in their eares, whereby they imagine the workmanship of God not to be a little amended. But herein they rather disgrace than adorne their persons, as by their nicenesse in apparell, for which I saie most nations doo not unjustlie deride us, as also for that we doo seeme to imitate all nations round about us, wherein we be like to the Polypus or Chameleon; and thereunto bestow most cost upon our arses, and much more than upon all the rest of our bodies, as women doo likewise upon their heads and shoulders. In women also it is most to be lamented that they doo now farre exceed the lightnesse of our men (who neverthesse are transformed from the cap even to the verie shoo) and such staring attire as in time past was supposed meet for none but light housewives onelie, is now become an habit for chaste and sober matrones. What should I saie of their doublets with pendant peeses on the brest full of jags and cuts, and sleeves of sundrie colours? their galligascons to beare out their bums and make their attire to sit plum round (as they terme it) about them? their fardingals, and diverslie coloured nether stocks of silke, ierdseie, and such like, whereby their bodies are rather deformed than commended? I have met with some of these trulles in London so disguised, that it hath passed my skill to discerne whether they were men or women."*

After this philippic, we shall proceed to notice the Dress of the Ladies, commencing with that of the Queen, who is thus described by Paul Hentzner, as he saw her passing on her way to chapel, at the royal palace of Greenwich. Having mentioned the procession of barons, earls, knights, etc., he adds,—

"Next came the queen, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, as we were told, very majestic; her face oblong, fair, but wrinkled; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant; her nose a little hooked; her lips narrow, and her teeth black (a defect the English seem subject to, from their too great use of sugar); she had in her ears two pearls, with very rich drops; she wore false hair, and that red; upon her head she had a small crown;—her bosom was uncovered, as all the English ladies have it, till they marry; and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels; her hands were small, her fingers long, and her stature neither tall nor low; her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day she was dressed in white silk, bordered with pearls of the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk, shot with silver threads; her train was very long, the end of it borne by a marchioness; instead of a chain, she had an oblong collar of gold and jewels.—While we were there, W. Slawata, a Bohemian baron, had letters to present to her; and she, after pulling off her glove, gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels.—The ladies of the court followed next to her, very handsome and well shaped, and for the most part dressed in white."†

A few articles of the customary dress of Elizabeth, not adverted to by Hentzner, and particularly the characteristic ruff and stomacher, it may be requisite to subjoin. The former of these was profusely laced, plaited, and apparently divergent from a centre on the back of her neck; it was very broad, extending on each side of her face, with the extremities reposing on her bosom, from which rose two wings of lawn, edged with jewels, stiffened with wire, and reaching to the top of her hair, which was moulded into the shape of a cushion, and richly covered with gems. The stomacher was strait and broad, and though leaving

* Holinshed, vol. i. p. 289, 290.—Harrison's Description of England.

† Hentzner's Travels in England. Edward Jeffery's edit. 8vo. 1797. p. 34.

the bosom bare, still formed a long waist by extending downwards; it was loaded with jewels and embossed gold, and preposterously stiff and formal.

The attachment of the Queen to dress was such, that she could not bear the idea of being rivalled, much less surpassed, in any exhibition of this kind.

“It happened,” relates Sir John Harrington, “that Ladie M. Howarde was possessede of a rich border, powderd wyth golde and pearle, and a velvet suite belonging thereto, which moved manie to envye; nor did it please the Queene, who thoughte it exceeded her owne. One daye the Queene did sende privately, and got the ladies rich vesture, which she put on herself, and came forth the chamber amonge the ladies; the kirtle and border was far too shorte for her Majestie’s height; and she askede every one, ‘How they likede her new-fancied suit?’ At length, she askede the owner herself, ‘If it was not made too short and ill-becoming?’—which the poor ladie did presentlie consente to. ‘Why then, if it become not me, as being too shorte, I am minded it shall never become thee, as being too fine; so it fitteth neither well.’ This sharp rebuke abashed the ladie, and she never adorned her herewith any more.”*

Neither could she endure, from whatever quarter it came, any censure, direct or indirect, or her love of personal decoration.

“One Sunday (April last),” says the same facetious knight, “my lorde of London preached to thee Queenes Majestie, and seemede to touche on the vanitie of deckinge the bodie too finely.—Her Majestie tolde the ladies, that ‘If the bishope helde more discourse on suche matters, shee wolde fitte him for heaven, but he shoulde walke thither withoute a staffe, and leave his mantle behind him:’ perchance the bishope hathe never soughte her Highnesse wardrobe, or he woulde have chosen another texte.”†

Of this costly wardrobe it is recorded in Chamberlaine’s epistolary notices, that it consisted of more than two thousand gowns, with all things answerable; and Mr. Steevens, commenting on a passage in *Cymbeline*, where Imogen exclaims—

“Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
I must be ripp’d,”—

give us the following interesting illustration.

“Clothes were not formerly, as at present, made of slight materials, were not kept in drawers, or given away as soon as lapse of time or change of fashion had impaired their value. On the contrary, they were hung up on wooden pegs in a room appropriated to the sole purpose of receiviug them; and though such cast-off things as were composed of *rich* substances, were occasionally *ripped* for domestick uses (viz. mantles for infants, vests for children, and counterpanes for beds), articles of inferior quality were suffered to *hang by the walls*, till age and moths had destroyed what pride would not permit to be worn by servants or poor relations.

“When a boy, at an ancient mansion-house in Suffolk, I saw one of these repositories, which (thanks to a succession of old maids!) had been preserved, with superstitious reverence, for almost a century and a half.

“When Queen Elizabeth died, she was found to have left above three thousand dresses behind her.”

With such a model before them, it may easily be credited, that our fair countrywomen vied with each other in the luxury, variety, and splendour of their eccentricities in this way, and a few remarks on his allusions, with some invectives from less good-tempered observers, will sufficiently illustrate the subject.

Benedict, describing the woman of his choice, says, “her hair shall be of what colour it please God;” an oblique stroke at a very prevalent fashion in Shakspeare’s time of colouring or dying the hair, and which, from its general adoption, not only excited the shaft of the satirist, but the reprobation of the pulpit. Nor were the ladies content with disfiguring their own hair, but so universally dismissed it for that of others, that it was a common practice with them, as Stubbes asserts in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, to allure children who had beautiful hair to private places, in order to deprive them of their envied locks.

* *Nugæ Antiquæ* apud Park, vol. i. p. 361.

† *Ibid.* p. 170.

That the dead were frequently rifled for this purpose, our poet has told us in more places than one; thus, in his sixty-eighth sonnet, he says—

— “the golden tresses of the dead,
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
To live a second life on second head,
‘And’ beauty’s dead fleece made another gay;”

and he repeats the charge in his *Merchant of Venice*,—

“ So are those crisped snaky golden locks,
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposed fairness, often known
To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.” Act iii. sc. 2.

The hair, when thus obtained, was often dyed of a sandy colour, in compliment to the Queen, whose locks were of that tint: and these false ornaments or “thatches,” as Timon terms them, were called periwigs; thus Julia, in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, contemplating the picture of her rival, observes,

“ Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow :
If that be all the difference in his love,
I’ll get me such a colour’d periwig.” Act iv. sc. 4.

Periwigs, which were first introduced into England about 1572, were to be had of all colours; for an old satirist, speaking of his countrywomen, says, “It is a woonder more than ordinary to beholde theyr perewigs of sundry collours.” A distinction, however, in wearing the hair, as well as in other articles of dress, existed between the matrons and unmarried women. “Gentlewomen virgins,” observes Fines Moryson, “weare gownes close to the body, and aprons of fine linen, and go bareheaded with their hair curiously knotted, and raised at the forehead, but many (against the cold, as they say) weare caps of hair that is not their own.”

To some of the various coverings for the hair our poet refers in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, when Falstaff, complimenting Mrs. Ford, exclaims, “thou hast the right arched bent of the brow, that becomes the ship-tire, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance.”

The ship-tire appears to have been an open flaunting head-dress, with scarfs or ribands floating in the air like streamers, or as Fenton himself, in the fifth act of this play, describes it,

“ With ribbons *pendant* flaring ’bout her head.”

The tire-valiant, if the text be correct, must mean a dress still more showy and ostentatious; and we know that feathers, jewels, and gold and silver ornaments, were common decorations in these days of gorgeous finery. Nash, in 1594, speaks of “lawn caps” with “snow-resembled silver curlings;”^{*} and a sarcastic poet in 1595 describes

— “ flaming heads with staring haire,
‘With’ wyers turnde like horns of ram—
To peacockes I compare them right,
That glorieth in their feathers bright.”[†]

Venice and Paris were the sources of fashion, and both occasionally furnished a more chaste and elegant costume for the female head than had been the objects of Falstaff’s encomium. The “French hood,” a favourite of the times, consisted simply of gauze or muslin, reaching from the back of the head down over the

^{*} “Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem,” 4to. 1594.

[†] “Quippes for upstart new fangled Gentlewomen: or a Glasse, to view the pride of vain glorious Wemen,” 4to. 1595.—Vide *Restituta*, vol. iii. p. 255.

forehead, and leaving the hair exposed on each side.* Cauls, or nets of gold thread, were thrown with much taste over their glossy tresses, and attracted the notice of the satirist just quoted:—

“ These glittering caules of golden plate
Wherewith their heads are richlie dect,
Makes them to seeme an angels mate
In judgment of the simple sect.”†

Another happy mode of embellishment consisted of placing gracefully on the hair artificial peascods, which were represented open, with rows of pearls for peas.

The lady's morning-cap was usually a mob; and the citizens' wives wore either a splendid velvet cap, or what was called the ‘ Minever cap,’ with peaks three inches high, white, and three-cornered.

Paint was openly used for the face:

“ These painted faces which they weare,
Can any tell from whence they came;” ‡

and masks and mufflers were in general use; the former, according to Stubbes, were made of velvet, “ wherewith when they ride abroad they cover all their faces, having holes made in them against their eyes, whereout they looke. So that if a man knew not their guise before, should chaunce to meet one of them, would think he met a monster or a devil, for face he can shew none, but two broad holes against their eyes, with glasses in them;” § the latter covered the lower part of the face only, as far as the nose, and had the appearance of a linen bandage. So common were these female masks in Shakspeare's days, that the author of “ Quippes for newfangled Gentlewomen,” after remarking that they were the offspring not of modesty but of pride, informs us that

— “ on each wight now are they seene,
The tallow-pale, the browning bay,
The swarthy blacke, the grassie-greene,
The pudding-red, the dapple-graie.”

The ruff, already partly described under the dress of Elizabeth, was common to both sexes; but under the fostering care of the ladies, attained, in stiffness, fineness, and dimensions, the most extravagant pitch of absurdity. It reached behind to the very top of the head, and the tenuity of the lawn or cambric of which it was made was such, that Stowe prophesies, they would shortly “ wear ruffles of a spider's web.” In order to support so slender a fabric, a great quantity of starch became necessary, the skilful use of which was introduced by a Mrs. Dingen Van Plesse in 1564, who taught her art for a premium of five guineas. Starching was subsequently improved by the introduction of various colours, one of which, the yellow die, being the invention of a Mrs. Turner, who was afterwards concerned in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, was dismissed with abhorrence from the fashionable world, in consequence of this abandoned woman being executed at Tyburn in a ruff of her favourite tint. The extreme indignation with which Stubbes speaks of the use of starch is highly amusing:—

“ One arch or pillar,” says he, “ wherewith the devil's kingdome of great ruffles is under-propped, is a certain kind of liquid matter which they call *starch*, wherein the devill hath learned them to wash and die their ruffles, which, being drie, will stand stiff and inflexible about their neckes. And this starch they make of divers substances—of all collours and hues, as white, redde, blewe, purple, and the like.”

We are further informed by the same vehement satirist, that the ruff had the additional support of an underpropper called a *suppertasse*, and that its plaits were adjusted by poking-sticks made of iron, steel, or silver, that, when used, were heated in the fire, a custom against which he expresses his wrath by relating a

* Strutt's Customs, vol. iii. plate 22. fig. 9.

† Restituta, vol. iii. p. 256.

‡ Restituta, vol. iii. p. 256.

§ Anatomie of Abuses, 4to. p. 59.

most curious story of a gentlewoman of Antwerp who had her ruff poked by the devil on the 27th of May, 1582, "the sounde whereof," says he, "is blowne through all the world, and is yet fresh in every man's memory." It appears that this unfortunate lady, being invited to a wedding, could not, although she employed two celebrated laundresses, get her ruff plaited according to her taste, upon which, proceeds Stubbes,

"She fell to sweare and teare, to curse and ban, casting the ruffles under feete, and wishing that the devil might take her when shee did wear any neckerchers againe;" a wish which was speedily accomplished; for the devil, assuming the form of a beautiful young man, made his appearance under the character of a suitor, and enquiring the cause of her agitation, "tooke in hande the setting of her ruffles, which he performed to her great contentation and liking; inso-much, as she, looking herself in a glasse (as the devill bad her), became greatly inamoured with him. This done, the young man kissed her, in the doing whereof, he writhed her neck in sunder, so she died miserably; her body being straight waies changed into blew and black colours, most ugglesome to beholde, and her face (which before was so amorous) became most deformed and fearfull to looke upon. This being knowne in the citie, great preparation was made for her buriall, and a rich coffin was provided, and her fearfull body was laide therein, and covered very sumptuously. Foure men immediately assayed to lift up the corpes, but could not move it; then sixe attempted the like, but could not once stirre it from the place where it stood. Whereat the standers-by marvelling, causing the coffin to be opened to see the cause thereof: where they found the body to be taken away, and a blacke catte, very leane and deformed, sitting in the coffin, setting of great ruffles, and frizling of haire, to the greate feare and woonder of all the beholders."*

The waist was beyond all proportion long, the bodice or stays terminating at the bottom in a point, and having in the fore part a pocket, for money, needle-work, and billets, a fashion to which Proteus alludes in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when he tells Valentine

" Thy letters _____
_____ shall be deliver'd
Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love."

Gowns were made of the richest materials, with velvet capes embroidered with bugelles, and with the sleeves curiously cut; † the fashionable petticoat was the Scottish fardingale, made of cloth, taffety, satin, or silk, and of enormous bulk, so that when an Elizabethan lady was dressed in one of these, with the gown, as was usually the case, stuffed about the shoulders, and the ruffe in the first style of the day, her appearance was truly formidable. Over all was frequently thrown a kirtle, mantle, or surcoat, with or without a head, formed of silk or velvet, and richly bordered with lace.

Silk-stockings, which were first worn by the Queen in 1560, Mrs. Montagu, her silk-woman, having presented her with a pair of this material in that year, soon became almost universal among the ladies, and formed one of the most expensive articles of their dress.

Shoes with very high heels, in imitation of the Venetian *chopine*, a species of stilt sometimes better than a foot in height, was the prevalent mode, and carried, for the sake of increasing the stature, to a most ridiculous excess. It never reached, indeed, this enormous dimension in England, but seems, from a passage in *Hamlet*, to have been of such a definite size, as to admit of a reference to it as a mark of admeasurement, for the Prince remarks, "Your Ladyship is nearer to heaven, than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine."

Fans, constructed of ostrich feathers, inserted into handles of gold, silver, or ivory, and wrought with great skill in various elegant forms, were so commonly worn that the author of "*Quippes for upstart newfangled Gentlewomen*," 1595, exclaims,—

" Were fannes, and flappes of feathers, found
To flit away the flisking flies,—
The wit of women we might praise,

* *Anatomie of Abuses*, 4to. p. 43.

† See Katharine's gown, in *Taming of the Shrew*.

But seeing they are still in hand,
 In house, in field, in church, in street;
 In summer, winter, water, land,
 In colde, in heate, in drie, in weet;
 I judge they are for wives such tooles
 As bables are, in playes, for fooles."

Silver and ivory handles were usual among ladies of the middle class of society, but in the higher ranks they were frequently decorated with gems, and the Queen had several new-year's gifts of fans, the handles of which were studded with diamonds and other jewels. Shakspeare has many allusions to fans of feathers;* and even hints, in his Henry the Eighth, that the coxcombs of his day were not ashamed to adopt their use. Act. i. sc. 3.

Perfumed bracelets, necklaces, and gloves, were favourite articles. "Gloves as sweet as damask roses," form part of the stock of Autolycus, and Mopsa tells the Clown, that he promised her "a pair of sweet gloves." Act. iv. sc. 3. The Queen in this, as in most other luxuries of dress, set the fashion; for Howes informs us, that in the fifteenth year of her reign, Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, presented her with a pair of perfumed gloves trimmed with four tufts of rose-coloured silk, in which she took such pleasure that she was always painted with those gloves on her hands, that their scent was so exquisite that it was ever after called the Earl of Oxford's perfume.

To these notices it may be added, that a small looking-glass pendent from the girdle, a pocket-handkerchief richly wrought with gold and silver, and a love-lock hanging wantonly over the shoulder, were customarily exhibited by the fashionable female.

Burton, writing at the close of the Shakspearean era, has given us a brief but exact enumeration of the feminine allurements of his day; a passage which, whilst it adds a few new particulars, will furnish an excellent recapitulation of what has been already advanced.

"Why," exclaims he, "do they decorate themselves with artificial flowers, the various colours of herbs, needle works of exquisite skill, quaint devices, and perfume their persons, wear inestimable riches in precious stones, crown themselves with gold and silver, use coronets and tires of several fashions; deck themselves with pendants, bracelets, ear-rings, chains, girdles, rings, pins, spangles, embroideries, shadows, rebatoes, versicoler ribands? Why do they make such glorious shews with their scarfs, feathers, fans, masks, furs, laces, tiffanies, ruffs, falls, calls, cuffs, damasks, velvets, tinsels, cloth of gold, silver tissue? Such setting up with corks, straitening with whale-bones; why, it is but as a day-net catcheth larks, to make young ones stoop unto them.—And when they are disappointed, they dissolve into tears, which they wipe away like sweat: weep with one eye, laugh with the other; or as children, weep and cry they can both together: and as much pity is to be taken of a woman weeping as of a goose going barefoot."†

We have seen in the extract from Harrison, at the commencement of this chapter, that a great portion of it is employed in satirising the extravagance and folly of the male-dress of his times, and the adduction of further particulars will serve but to strengthen the propriety of his invective, and to prove, what will scarcely be credited, that, in the absurdity and frivolity of personal ornament, the men far surpassed the other sex.

Though there is reason to conclude that this taste for expensive and frivolous decoration, was originally derived from the reign of Elizabeth, yet was it even still more encouraged by James; for though he set no example of profusion of this kind in his own person, Sir Arthur Wheldon declaring that he was,

* For a correct representation of these fans, *vide* Baudry's edition of Shakspeare's Complete Works. vol. i. p. 80.

† Anatomie of Melancholy, folio, 8th edit. p. 293, 294, 307.—In Vaughan's "Golden Grove," also, the first edition of which appeared in 1600, may be found some curious notices on "superfluitie of apparell" with regard to both sexes; he tells us that the women in the early ages of the world "imitated not hermaproditos, in wearing of men's doublets. They wore no chaines of gold, &c.—they went not clothed in velvet gownes, nor in chamlet peticotes. They smelt not unto pomander, civet, muske, and such lyke trumperies."

"in his apparrell so constant, as by his good will he would never change his cloathes till very ragges; his fashion never: insomuch, as one bringing to him a hat of a Spanish block, he cast it from him, swearing he neither loved them nor their fashions. Another time, bringing him roses on his shoes, asked, if they would make him a ruffe-footed-dove? one yard of sixpenny ribband served that turne." *

Yet was he passionately attached to dress in the persons of his courtiers;

"He doth admire good fashion in cloaths;" says Lord Howard, writing to Sir John Harington in 1611; "I would wish you to be well trimmed; get a new jerkin well bordered, and not too short; the King saith, he liketh a flowing garment; be sure it be not all of one sort, but diversly coloured, the collar falling somewhat down, and your ruff well stiffend and bushy. We have lately had many gallants who failed in their suits, for want of due observance of these matters. The King is nicely heedfull of such points, and dwelleth on good looks and handsome accoutrements. Eighteen servants were lately discharged, and many more will be discarded, who are not to his liking in these matters.—Robert Carr is now most likely to win the Prince's affection, and dothe it wonderously in a little time. The Prince leaneth on his arm, pinches his cheek, smoothes his ruffled garment, and, when he looketh at Carr, directeth discourse to divers others. This young man dothe much study all art and device; he hath changed his tailors and tiremen many times, and all to please the Prince, who laugheth at the long grown fashion of our young courtiers, and wisheth for change for every day." †

King James's love of finery seems to have been imbibed, not only by his courtiers, but by all his youthful subjects; for from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, nothing can exceed the fantastic attire by which the beau of this period was distinguished. His hair was worn long and flowing, "whose length," says Decker, "before the rigorous edge of any puritanical pair of scissors should shorten the breadth of a finger, let the three housewifely spinsters of destiny rather curtail the thread of thy life;—let it play openly with the lascivious wind, even on the top of your shoulders." ‡ His hat was made of silk, velvet, taffeta, or beaver, the last being the most expensive; the crown was high, and narrow toward the top, "like the speare or shaft of a steeple," observes Stubbes, "standing a quarter of a yard above their heads;" the edges, and sometimes the whole hat, were embroidered with gold and silver, to which a costly hat-band, sparkling with gems, and a lofty plume of feathers, were generally added. It appears, from a passage in the *Taming of the Shrew*, that to these high hats the name of copatain was given; for Vincentio, surprised at Tranio being dressed as a gentleman, exclaims, "O fine villain! A silken doublet! a velvet hose! a scarlet cloak! and a copatain hat!" a word which Mr. Steevens considers as synonymous with a high copt hat. It was usual with gallants to wear gloves in their hats, as a memorial of their ladies' favour.

Of the beard and its numerous forms, we have already seen a curious detail by Harrison, to which we may subjoin, that it was customary to dye it of various colours, and to mould it into various forms, according to the profession, age, or fancy of the wearer. Red was one of the most fashionable tints; § a beard of "formal cut" distinguished the justice ** and the judge; a rough bushy beard marked the clown, and a spade-beard, or a stiletto, or dagger-shaped beard, graced the soldier. "It is observable," remarks Mr. Malone, "that our author's patron, Henry Earl of Southampton, who spent much of his time in camps, is drawn with the latter of these beards; and his unfortunate friend, Lord Essex, is constantly represented with the former."

Of the effeminate fashions of this age, perhaps the most effeminate was the custom of wearing jewels and roses in the ears, or about the neck, and of cherish-

* The Court and Character of King James. Written and taken by Sir A. W. being an eye and ear witness. 12mo. 1650. p. 180, 181.

† *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 391, 392.

‡ Decker's *Gull's Hornbook*, reprint of 1812, p. 83, 87.

§ Bottom, in *Nidsummer Night's Dream*, mentions also a straw-coloured, a orange-awny, a purple-in-grain, and a perfect yellow, beard, act i. sc. 2.

** See Jaques's description of the Seven Ages in *As You Like It*, act ii. sc. 7.

ing a long lock of hair under the left ear, called a love-lock. The first and least offensive of these decorations, the use of jewels and rings in the ear, was general through the upper and middle ranks, nor was it very uncommon to see gems worn appended to a riband round the neck. Roses were almost always an appendage of the love-lock, but these were, for the most part, formed of riband, yet we are told by Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "that it was once the fashion to stick real flowers in the ear." The love-lock, with its termination in a silken rose, had become so notorious, that Prynne at length wrote an express treatise against it, which he entitled, "*The Unloveliness of Love-locks, and long womanish Hair*," 1628. *

The ruff never reached the extravagant dimensions of that in the other sex, yet it gradually acquired such magnitude as to offend the eye of Elizabeth, who, in one of her sumptuary laws, ordered it, when reaching beyond "a nayle of a yeard in depth," to be clipped. †

The doublet and hose, to the eighth year of Elizabeth's reign, had been of an enormous size, especially the breeches, which being puckered, stuffed, bolstered and distended with wool and hair, attained a magnitude so preposterous, that, as Strutt relates on the authority of a MS. in the Harleian collection, "there actually was a scaffold erected round the inside of the parliament-house for the accommodation of such members as wore those huge breeches; and that the said scaffold was taken down when, in the eighth of Elizabeth, those absurdities went out of fashion." ‡

The doublet was then greatly reduced in size, yet so hard-quilted, that Stubbes says, the wearer could not bow himself to the ground, so stiff and sturdy it stood about him. It was made of cloth, silk, or satin, fitting the body like a waistcoat, surmounted by a large cape, and accompanied either with long close sleeves, or with very wide ones, called Danish sleeves. The breeches, hose, or gallygaskins, now shrunk in their bulk, were either made close to the form, or rendered moderately round by stuffing; the former, which ended far above the knee, were often made of crimson satin, cut and embroidered, and the latter had frequently a most indelicate appendage, to which our poet has too often indulged the license of allusion. A cloak surmounting the whole, of the richest materials, and generally embroidered with gold or silver, was worn buttoned over the shoulder. Fox-skins, lamb-skins, and sables were in use as facings, but the latter were restricted to the nobility, none under the rank of an earl being allowed to wear sables, which were so expensive, that an old writer of 1577, speaking of the luxury of the times, says, "that a thousand ducats were sometimes given for a face of sables;" consequently, as Mr. Malone has remarked, "a suit trimmed with sables was, in Shakspeare's time, the richest dress worn by men in England." *g*

The stockings, or hose as they were called in common with the breeches, consisted either of woven silk, or were cut out by the taylor from silk, velvet, damask, or other precious stuff. They were gartered, externally, and below the knee, with materials of such expensive quality, that Howes tells us, in his *Continuation of Stowe's Chronicle*, "men of mean rank weare garters and shoe-roses of more than five pounds price." Decker advises his gallant to "strive to fashion his legs to his silk stockings, and his proud gate to his broad garters," which being so

* Frequent references to these fashions may be found in our author. Jonson and Fletcher also abound with them; and see that curious exposition of fashionable follies, Decker's *Gull's Hornbook*, Reprint, p. 86, 137, &c.

† Vide Stowe's *Annals*, p. 869.—The divisions, or pieces of the brim of the collar or ruffe, were, according to Cotgrave's *Dictionary*, 1611, termed *piccadillies*. And the author of *London and its Environs* described, tells us, that in *Piccadilly* "there were formerly no houses, and only one shop for Spanish ruffs, which was called the *Piccadilly* or *ruff* shop." Vide vol. v.

‡ Strutt's *Customs*, vol. iii. p. 85.—The next age saw this absurd mode of dress revived: and Bulmer, in his *Pedigree of the English Gallant*, relates, that, when the law was in force against the use of *bags* for stuffing breeches, a man was brought before a court of justice, charged with wearing the prohibited article, upon which, in order to refute the accusation, he produced from within "a pair of sheets, two table cloths, ten napkins, four shirts, a brush, a glass, a comb, night-caps, &c." p. 548.

conspicuous a part of the dress, were either manufactured of gold and silver, or were made of satin and velvet with a deep gold fringe. The common people were content with worsted galloon, or what were called caddis-garters. The gaudiness of attire, indeed, with regard to these articles of clothing, appears to have been carried to a most ridiculous excess; red silk-stockings, parti-coloured garters, and cross garterings, so as to represent the varied colours of the Scotch plaid, were frequently exhibited.

Nor were the shoes and boots of this period less extravagantly ostentatious. Corked shoes, or pantofles, are described by Stubbes as bearing up their wearers two inches or more from the ground, as being of various colours, and razed, carved, cut, and stitched. They were not unfrequently fabricated of velvet, embroidered with the precious metals, and when fastened with strings, these were covered with enormous roses of riband, curiously ornamented and of great value. Thus Hamlet speaks of "Provencial roses on my razed shoes;" and it is remarkable, that, as in the present age, both shoes and slippers were worne shaped after the right and left foot. Shakspeare describes his smith

" Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste
Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet :

and Scott, in his "Discoverie of Witchcraft," observes, that he who receiveth a mischance, "will consider, whether he put not on his shirt wrong side outwards, or his left shoe on his right foot."

The boots were, if possible, still more eccentric and costly than the shoes, resembling, in some degree, though on a larger scale, the theatric buskin of the modern stage. They were usually manufactured of russet cloth or leather, hanging loose and ruffled about the leg, with immense tops turned down and fringed, and the heel decorated with gold or silver spurs. Decker speaks of "a gilt spur and a ruffled boot;" and in another place adds,—"let it be thy prudence to have the tops of them wide as the mouth of a wallet, and those with fringed boot-hose over them to hang down to thy ancles." Yet even this extravagance did not content those who aspired to the highest rank of fashion; for Doctor Nott, the editor of Decker's Horn-book, in a note on the last passage which we have quoted, informs us, on the authority of Stubbes's Anatomie of Abuses, that these boots were often "made of cloth fine enough for any hand, or ruff; and so large, that the quantity used would nearly make a shirt: they were embroidered in gold and silver; having on them the figures of birds, animals, and antiques in various coloured silks: the needle-work alone of them would cost from four to ten pounds". Shakspeare alludes to the large boots with ruffles, or loose tops, which were frequently called lugged boots, in All's Well That Ends Well, act iii. sc. 2; and we find, from the same authority, that boots closely fitting the leg were sometimes worn; for Falstaff, in Henry the Fourth, Part II, accounting for the Prince's attachment to Poins, mentions, among his other qualifications, that he "wears his boot very smooth, like unto the sign of the leg." Act ii sc. 4.

Nor was the interior clothing of the beau less sumptuous and expensive than his exterior apparel; his shirts, relates that minute observer, Stubbes, were made of "cambricke, Hollande, lawne, or els of the finest cloth that may be got." And were so wrought with "needle-work of silke, and so curiously stitched with other knackes beside, that their price would sometimes amount to ten pounds."

No gentleman was considered as dressed without his dagger and rapier; the former, richly gilt and ornamented, was worn at the back: thus Capulet, in Romeo and Juliet, exclaims,

" This dagger hath mista'en,—for, lo ! his house
Is empty on the back of Montague—
And is mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom : "

Act v. sc. 3.

and an old play, of the date of 1750, expressly tells us,

"Thou must weare thy sword by thy side,
And thy *dagger* handsomly at thy backe:"*

The rapier, or small sword, which had been known in this country from the reign of Henry the Eighth, or even earlier, entirely superseded, about the 20th of Elizabeth, the use of the heavy or two-handed sword and buckler; an event which Justice Shallow, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, is represented as regretting.† Though occasionally used as an offensive weapon, and certainly a more dangerous instrument than its predecessor, it was chiefly worn as a splendid ornament, the hilt and scabbard being profusely and often elegantly decorated. It was also the custom to wear these swords when dancing, as appears from a passage in *All's Well that Ends Well*, where Bertram says,

"I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock—
Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn,
But one to dance with;"

Act ii. sc. 1.

an allusion which has received most satisfactory illustration from Mr. Douce, in an extract taken from Stafforde's "*Briefe Concept of English Pollicy*," 1581, 4to, in which not only this practice is mentioned, but the preceding fashion of the heavy sword and buckler is particularly noticed:—

"I thinke wee were as much dread or more of our enemies, when our gentlemen went simply, and our serving men plainely, without cuts or gardes, bearing their *heavy swords and bucklers* on their thighes, insted of cuts and gardes and *light daunsing swordes*; and when they rode, carrying good speares in theyr hands in stede of white rods, which they carry now more like ladies or gentlewomen than men; all which delicacyes maketh our men cleane effeminate and without strength." Vol. i. p. 315.

It soon became the fashion to wear these rapiers of such an enormous length, that government was obliged to interfere, and a sumptuary law was passed to limit these weapons to three feet, which was published by proclamation, together with one for the curtailment of ruffs.

"He," says Stowe, "was held the greatest gallant, that had the deepest ruffe and longest rapier: the offence to the eye of the one, and the hurt unto the life of the subject that came by the other, caused her Majesty to make proclamation against them both, and to place selected grave citizens at every gate to cut the ruffles, and breake the rapiers' points of all passengers that exceeded a yeard in length of their rapiers."‡

This regulation occasioned a whimsical circumstance, related by Lord Talbot, in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, dated June 23d, 1580:—

"The French Imbasidore, Mounswer Mouiser (Malvoisier), ridinge to take the ayer, in his retorne cam thowrowe Smithfild; and ther, at the bars, was steayed by thos offisers thath sitteth to cut sours, by reason his raper was longer than the statute: He was in a great feaurie, and dreawe his raper; in the meane season my Lord Henry Seamore cam, and so steayed the matt: Hir Ma^{tie} is greatlie ofended wth the offisers, in that they wanted jugement."§

This account of the male fashionable dress, during the days of Shakspeare, has sufficiently borne out the assertion which we made at its commencement,—that in extravagance and frivolity it surpassed the caprice and expenditure of the other sex; a charge which is repeated by Burton at the close of this era; for, exclaiming against the luxury of fine clothes, he remarks,

* "The Longer thou Livest the more Fool thou art."—*Biographia Dramatica*, vol. ii. p. 193.

† To the old two-handed sword, and to the monstrous stuffed hose, Ben Jonson most humorously refers us, in his "*Epicœne; or, the Silent Woman*," where True-wit frightens Daw by an exaggerated description of Sir Amorous La Foole's warlike attire. "He has got," says he, "somebody's old two-hand sword, to mow you off at the knees: and that sword hath spawn'd such a dagger!—But then he is so hung with pikes, halberds, petronels, callivers, and muskets, that he looks like a justice of peace's hall: a man of two thousand a year is not cess'd at so many weapons as he has on. There was never fencer challeng'd at so many several foils. You would think he meant to murder all St. Pulchre's parish. If he could but victual himself for half a year in his *breeches*, he is sufficiently arm'd to overrun a country."—Act. iv. sc. 5.

‡ Stowe's *Annals*, p. 869.

§ *Illustrations of British History*, vol. ii. p. 228.

“women are bad, and men worse.—So ridiculous we are in our attires, and for cost so excessive, that as Hierom said of old,—’tis an ordinary thing to put a thousand oaks and an hundred oxen into a suit of apparell, to wear a whole mannor on his back. What with shoo-ties, hangers, points, caps and feathers, scarfs, bands, cuffs, etc., in a short space their whole patrimonies are consumed. Heliogabalus is taxed by Lampridius, and admired in his age for wearing jewels in his shoos, a common thing in our times, not for Emperors and Princes, but almost for serving-men and taylors: all the flowres, stars, constellations, gold and pretious stones do condescend to set out their shoos.”*

The dress of the citizen, indeed, was, if less elegant, equally showy, and sometimes fully as expensive as that of the man of fashion. The medium habit may, with great probability, be considered as sketched in the following humorous tale, derived from a popular pamphlet printed in 1609:—

“A citizen, for recreation-sake,
To see the country would a journey take
Some dozen mile, or very little more;
Taking his leave with friends two months before,
With drinking healths, and shaking by the hand,
As he had travaill’d to some new-found-land.
Well: taking horse with very much ado,
London he leaveth for a day or two:
And as he rideth, meets upon the way
Such as (what haste soever) bid men stay.
“Sirrah! (says one) stand, and your purse deliver,
I am a *taker*, thou must be a *giver*.”
Unto a wood hard by they hale him in,
And rifle him unto his very skin.
“Maisters, (quoth he) pray heare me ere you go:
For you have rob’d more now than you do know.
My horse, in troth, I borrow’d of my brother:
The bridle and the saddle, of another:

The *jerkin* and the *bases* be a taylor’s:
The *scarfe*, I do assure you, is a saylour’s;
The *falling band* is likewise none of mine,
Nor *cuffes*; as true as this good light doth shine.
The *sattin-doublet* and *rays’d velvet hose*
Are our church-warden’s—all the parish knows.
The boots are John the grocer’s, at the Swan:
The spurrs were lent me by a serving-man.
One of my *rings* (that with the great red stone),
In sooth I borrow’d of my gossip Jone:
Her husband knows not of it. Gentlemen!
Thus stands my case:—I pray shew favour then.”
“Why, (quoth the theeves) thou need’st not
greatly care,
Since in thy loss so many beare a share.
The world goes hard: many good fellowes lacke:
Looke not, at this time, for a penny backe.
Go, tell, at London, thou didst meete with foure
That, rifling *thee*, have rob’d at least a *score*.”†

Under the next section of this chapter, including the Modes of Living, it is our intention to give a short detail of the household furniture, eating, drinking, and domestic economy of our town-ancestors, during the close of the sixteenth, and beginning of the seventeenth century.

In that part of the first volume which is appropriated to the Modes of Living in the Country, we have seen Holinshed alluding to the increasing luxury of his age in furniture, the convenience, richness, and magnificence of which, as displayed in the upper and middle classes of society in the metropolis, we shall now endeavour briefly to illustrate.

That the palaces of Elizabeth were decorated with all the splendour that tapestry, embroidery, and cloths of gold and silver, and services of plate could effect, we have numberless proofs; but that they united with these the still higher luxuries of comfort and accommodation, too often wanting amid the most gorgeous scenes, we have the testimony of Sir John Harington, who, in his “Treatise on Playe,” circa 1597, thus describes the conveniences which the Queen had provided for her courtiers:—

“It is a great honor of the Queen’s court, that no princes servants fare so well and so orderly:—to be short, the stately pallaces, goodly and many chambers, fayr gallerys, large gardens, sweet walkes, that princes with magnificent cost do make (the xxth parte of which they use not themselves), all shew that they desire the ease, content and pleasure of theyr followers, as well as themselves. Which matter, though it be more proper to another discourse, yet I colde not but towch it in this, agaynst theyr error rather than awstertye, that say play becomes not the presence, and that it would not as well become the state of the chamber to have *easye quilted and lyned forms and stools for the lords and ladyes to sit on*, as great plank forms that two yeomen can scant

* Anatomie of Melancholy, 8th edit. folio. p. 295

† “Doctor Merrie-man; or nothing but Mirth. Written by S. R. At London, printed for John Deane, at Temple Barre.” 1609. 4to. p. 24—Vide Restituta, vol. iii. p. 442. Samuel Rowland is supposed to be the author of this lively satire.

remove out of their places, and waynscot stooles so hard, that since great breeches were layd asyde, men can skant indewr to sitt on."

Hentzner, in his *Travels*, gives a still further display of the costly costume of the Queen's apartments. At Windsor Castle he tells us that Her Majesty had

"Two bathing-rooms cieled and wainscoted with glass;" and at Hampton Court he adds, "her closet in the chapel was most splendid, quite transparent, having its window of chrystal. We were led into two chambers, called the presence, or chambers of audience, which shone with tapestry of gold and silver, and silk of different colours.—Here is besides a small chapel richly hung with tapestry, where the Queen performs her devotions. In her bed-chamber the bed was covered with very costly cover lids of silk:—in one chamber were several excessively rich tapestries, which are hung up when the queen gives audience to foreign ambassadors; there were numbers of cushions ornamented with gold and silver; many counterpanes and coverlids of beds lined with ermine: in short, all the walls of the palace shine with gold and silver. Here is besides a certain cabinet called Paradise, where besides that every thing glitters so with silver, gold and jewels, as to dazzle ones eyes, there is a musical instrument made all of glass, except the strings."*

The emulation of the nobility left them little behind their Queen in ornamental profusion of this kind; and the picture which Shakspeare has drawn of Imogen's chamber in *Cymbeline*, may be quoted as an apposite instance, for he ever imparts the costume of his native island to that of every other country:—

"Her bed-chamber was hanged
With tapestry of silk and silver; the story
Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman—
—————A piece of work
So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
In workmanship, and value.
—————The chimney-piece,
Chaste Dian bathing.—
—————The roof o' the chamber
With golden cherubins is fretted: Her andirons
(I had forgot them) were two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing." Act ii. sc. 4.

To this sketch we can add a few features from a little work entitled "*The Mirror of Madnes*," anno 1576, where the house of the opulent man is thus described:—

"My chaumbers, parloures, and other such romes, hanged wyth clothe of tyssue, arrace, and golde; my cupbordes heades set oute and adorned after the richest, costlieste, and most gloryous maner, wyth one cuppe cocke height upon an other, beside the greate basen and ewer both of silver and golde; filled at convenient tymes with sweete and pleasaunt waters, wherewith my delicate hands may be washed, my heade recreated, and my nose refreshed, etc."†

When Lævinus Lemnius, a celebrated physician and divine of Zealand, visited London, during the reign of Elizabeth, he was delighted with the houses and furniture of the middle classes:—

"The neate cleanliness," says he, "the exquisite finenesse, the pleasaunte and delightfull furniture in every point for household, wonderfully rejoyced mee; their chambers and parlours, strawed over with sweet herbes, refreshed mee; their nosegayes finelye entermingled wyth sondry sortes of fragaunte floures, in their bed-chambers and privie roomes, with comfortable smell cheered me up, and entierlye delighted all my sences."‡

To these general descriptions, we shall subjoin some further remarks on a few of the articles which they contain; minutiae which will render us more familiarly acquainted with the domestic arrangements of our forefathers.

Arras or tapestry, representing landscapes and figures, formed the almost universal hangings for rooms below, and chambers above. When first introduced, it was attached to the bare walls: but it was soon found necessary, in consequence

* *Travels in England*, p. 54—58.

† *Censura Literaria*, vol. viii. p. 19.

‡ "*The Touchstone of Complexions, &c.*" First written in Latine by Levine Lemnie, and now Englished by Thomas Newton. Small 8vo. bl. l. 1576.

of the damp arising from the brick-work, to suspend it on wooden frames, placed at such a distance from the sides of the room, as would easily admit of any person being introduced behind it, a facility which soon converted these vacancies into common hiding-places. Thus Shakspeare, during his scenic developments, has very frequent recourse to this expedient. "I will ensconce me behind the arras;" * "I whipt me behind the arras," † "Look thou stand within the arras:" ‡ "Go hide thee behind the arras:" § "Behind the arras I'll convey myself," ** etc., etc.

We have seen that in the Country, mottoes were often placed in halls and servants' chambers, for the instruction of the domestics; a custom which was also adopted on tapestry for the improvement of their superiors, and to which Shakspeare refers in his Rape of Lucrece,

"Who fears a sentence, or an old man's saw,
Shall by a *painted cloth* be kept in awe;"

and is further confirmed by Dr. Bulleyne, who in, in one of his productions, says, — "This is a comelie parlour,—and faire clothes, with pleasaunte borders aboute the same, with many wise sayings painted upon them."

What these wise sayings were, we are taught by the following extract from a publication of 1601: —

"Read what is written on the *painted cloth*:
Do no man wrong; be good unto the poor;
Beware the mouse, the maggot and the moth,
And ever have an eye unto the door;
Trust not a fool, a villain, nor a whore;
Go neat, not gay, and spend but as you spare;
And turn the colt to pasture with the mare; &c." ††

proverbial wisdom, which Orlando, in *As You Like It*, designates by the phrase "right painted cloth." Act iii. sc. 2.

That "the arras figures," though in general coarsely executed, had strongly impressed the mind of Shakspeare, and furnished him with no small portion of imagery and allusion, has been very satisfactorily established by Mr. Whiter, who remarks, that their "effects may be perpetually traced by the observing critic," even "when the poet himself is totally unconscious of this predominating influence."

The manner of illuminating the halls and banquetting rooms of the Great at this period, was truly classical. We find that Homer describing the palace of Alcinous, says —

"Youths forged of gold, at every table there,
Stood holding flaming torches;"

and Lucretius, speaking of the Dome of the opulent, describes its walls with

"A thousand lamps irradiate, propt sublime
By frolic forms of youths in massy gold,
Flinging their splendours o'er the midnight feast."

Similar to these were the

"fixed candlesticks,
With torch-staves in their hands," *Henry V.* act iv. sc. 2.

of our ancestors, which generally represented a man in armour with his hands extended, in which were placed the sockets for the lights; and we may easily

* *Merry Wives of Windsor*, act iii. sc. 3.

† *King John*, act iv. sc. 1.

** *Hamlet*, act iii. sc. 3.

†† "No whipping nor tripping, but a kind of friendly snipping," 8vo.

† *Much Ado about Nothing*, act i. sc. 3.

§ *Henry IV.* Part I. act ii. sc. 4.

conceive how splendid these might be rendered by the arts of the goldsmith and jeweller.

Where these antique candelabras were not adopted, living candleholders supplied their place, and were, indeed, always present, when a central or perambulatory light was required: "Give me a torch," says Romeo,

"I'll be a candle-holder and look on." Act i. sc. 4.

The gentlemen-pensioners of Queen Elizabeth usually held her torches; and Shakspeare represents Henry the Eighth going to Wolsey's palace, preceded by sixteen torch-bearers. At great entertainments, beside candelabras fixed against the sides of the room, torch-bearers stood by the tables, supplying the light which we now receive from chandeliers.

Watch-lights, which were divided into equal portions by marks, each of which burnt a limited time, were common in the bed-chambers of the wealthy; they are alluded to in Tomkis's *Albumazar*, 1614, where Sulpitia says, "Why should I sit up all night like a watching-candle?"

Every bed-chamber was furnished with two beds, a standing-bed and a truckle-bed; in the former slept the master, and in the latter his page. The Host, in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, directing Simple where to find Sir John Falstaff, says, — "There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed, and truckle-bed;" and Decker and Middleton further illustrate the custom, when the first, alluding to a page, says, he is "so dear to his Lordship, as for the excellency of his fooling to be admitted both to ride in coach with him, and to lie at his very feet on a truckle-bed;" and the second, addressing a similar personage, exclaims, — "Well, go thy ways, for as sweet a breasted page as ever lay at his master's feet in a truckle-bed." It may be added that the standing-bed had frequently on it a counterpoint, or counterpane, so rich and costly as, according to Stowe, to be worth sometimes a thousand marks. This piece of luxury forms one of Gremio's articles, when enumerating the furniture of his city-house, a catalogue which throws much curious light upon our present subject: —

—————"My house within the city,
Is richly furnished with plate and gold;
Basons and ewers, to lave her dainty hands;
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry:
In ivory coffers I have stuffed my crowns;
In cypress chests my arras, counter points,
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,
Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,
Valence of Venice gold in needle-work,
Pewter and brass, and all things that belong
To house, or housekeeping." *Taming of the Shrew*, act ii. sc. 1.

Pewter, during the reign of Elizabeth, was considered as a very costly material, and, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, had been so rare, as to be hired by the year, even for the use of noblemen's houses.

The ivory coffers, and cypress chests, mentioned in Gremio's list, were esteemed, at this period, highly ornamental pieces of furniture for apartments designed for the reception of visitors. "I have seen," relates Mr. Steevens, "more than one of these, as old as the time of our poet. They were richly ornamented on the tops and sides with scroll-work, emblematical devices, etc. and were elevated on feet." Shakspeare has an allusion to this custom in *Twelfth Night*, where he speaks of

"Empty trunks, o'er flourished by the Devil." Act iii. sc. 4.

The tables in these apartments, and in the halls of the nobility, were so constructed as to turn up; being flat leaves, united by hinges, and resting on tressels, so as to fold into a small compass. Thus Capulet, wanting room for the dancers in his hall, calls out

“ A hall! a hall! give room, and foot it, girls,
More light, ye knaves; and *turn the tables up*.” Act i. sc. 5.

When dinner or supper was served up, these tables were covered with carpets; hence Gremio exclaims, “ Where’s the cook? Is supper ready? — Be the carpets laid?”

Pictures constituted a frequent decoration in the rooms of the wealthy; and there are numerous instances to prove that those which were estimated as valuable, were protected by curtains. Olivia, addressing Viola in *Twelfth Night*, says, — “ We will draw the curtain, and shew you the picture;” the same imagery occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Pandarus, unveiling Cressida, uses almost the same words: “ Come draw this curtain, and let us see your picture.” The passage, however, which Mr. Douce has quoted in illustration of this subject, as it decides the point, will supersede all further reference: — “ In Deloney’s ‘ Pleasant history of Jack of Newbery,’ printed before 1597, it is recorded,” he remarks, “ that ‘ in a faire large parlour which was wainscotted round about, Jacke of Newbery had fifteene faire pictures hanging, which were covered with curtaines of greene silke, fringed with gold, which he would often shew to his friends.’”

The practice of strewing floors with rushes was general before the introduction of carpets for this purpose, and the first mansions in the kingdom could boast of nothing superior in this respect. Shakspeare has many lines in reference to the custom; Glendower, for instance, interpreting Lady Mortimer’s address to her husband, says,

————— “ She bids you
Upon the wanton *rushes* lay you down.” *K. Henry IV.* act iii. sc. 1.

Again Iachimo, rising from the trunk in Imogen’s chamber, exclaims: —

————— “ Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the *rushes*, ere he waken’d
The chastity he wounded;” *Cymbeline*, act ii. sc. 2.

and lastly, Romeo calls out

“ A torch for me: let wantons light of heart,
Tickle the senseless *rushes* with their heels.” Act i. sc. 4.

Similar allusions abound in our old dramatic poets, one of which we shall give for the singularity of its comparison: “ All the ladies and gallants,” says Jonson, in his ‘*Cynthia’s Revels*’ “ lye languishing upon the rushes, like so many pounded cattle i’ the midst of harvest.” Act ii. sc. 5.

The utility of the rush, and the species used for this purpose, will be illustrated by the following passages: — “ Rushes that grow upon dry groundes,” observes Dr. Bulleyne, “ be good to strew in halles, chambers, and galleries, to walke upon, defending apparell, as traynes of gownes and kertles from dust;” * and Decker tells us of windowes spread with hearbs, the chimney drest up with greene boughs, and the floore strewed with bulrushes.” †

Of the hospitality of the English, and of the style of eating and drinking in the upper ranks of society, Harrison has given us the following curious, though general, detail.

“ In number of dishes and change of meat,” he remarks, “ the nobilitie of England (whose cookes are for the most part muscally headed Frenchmen and strangers) doo most exceed, sith there is no daie in maner that passeth over their heads, wherein they have not onelie béefe, mutton, veale, lambe, kid, porke, conie, capon, pig, or so manie of these as the season yeeldeth: but also

* Bulwarke of Defence, 1579, fol. 21.

† Belman of London, 1612. sig. B. 4.—We may add, also, to this enumeration, the general use of large mirrors, or looking-glasses, for Hentzner tells us that he was shewn, “ at the house of Leonard Smith, a *taylor*, a most perfect looking-glass, ornamented with gold, pearls, silver, and velvet, so richly as to be estimated at 500 écus du soleil.”—*Travels*, p. 32.

some portion of the red or fallow déere, beside great varietie of fish and wild foule, and thereto sundrie other delicacies wherein the sweet hand of the seafaring Portingale is not wanting : so that for a man to dine with one of them, and to tast of everie dish that standeth before him (which few use to doo, but ech one feedeth upon that meat him best liketh for the time, the beginning of everie dish notwithstanding being reserved unto the greatest personage that sitteth at the table, to whome it is drawn up still by the waiters as order requireth, and from whence it descendeth againe even to the lower end, whereby each one may tast thereof) is rather to yield unto a conspi-
racie with a greate deale of meat for the spéedie suppression of naturall health, then the use of a necessarie meane to satisfie himselfe with a competent repast, to susteine his bodie withall.—

“The chiefe part likewise of their dailie provision is brought in before them (commonlie in silver vessell, if they be of the degree of barons, bishops and upwards) and placed on their tables, whereof when they have taken what it pleaseth them, the rest is reserved, and afterward sent downe to their serving men and waiters, who féed thereon in like sort with convenient moderation, their reversion also being bestowed upon the poore, which lie readie at their gates in great numbers to receive the same. This is spoken of the principall tables whereat the nobleman, his ladie and gues-tes are accustomed to sit, beside which they have a certeine ordinarie allowance daillie appointed for their hals, where the chiefe officers and household servants (for all are not permitted by custome to waite upon their master) and with them such inferiour gues-tes doo feed as are not of calling to associat the noble man himselfe (so that besides those afore mentioned, which are called to the principall table, there are commonlie fortie or three-score persons fed in those hals), to the great reliefe of such poore sutors and strangers also as oft be partakers thereof and otherwise like to dine hardlie. As for drinke it is usuallie filled in pots, gobblets, jugs, bols of silver in noble mens houses, also in fine Venice glasses of all formes, and for want of these elsewhere in pots of earth of sundrie colours and moulds (whereof manie are garnished with silver) or at the leastwise in pewter, all which notwithstanding are seldome set on the table, but each one as necessitie urgeth, calleth for a cup of such drinke as him listeth to have: so that when he hath tasted of it he delivered the cup againe to some one of the standers by, who making it cleane by pouring out the drinke that remaineth, restoreth it to the cupbord from whence he fetched the same. By this devise,—much idle tippling is further more cut off, for if the full pots should continuallie stand at the elbow or neere the trencher, diverse would alwaies be dealing with them, whereas now they drinke seldome and onelie when necessitie urgeth, and so avoid the note of great drinking, or often troubling of the servitors with filling of their bols. Never-
thelesse in the noble men’s hals, this order is not used, neither in anie mans house commonlie under the degree of a knight or esquire of great revenues. It is a world to see in these our daies, wherein gold and silver most aboundeth, how that our gentilitie as lothing those mettals (bicause of the plentie) do now generallie choose rather the Venice glasses both for our wine and béere, than anie of those mettals or stone wherein before time we have béene accustomed to drinke, but such is the nature of man generallie that it most coveleth things difficult to be attained; and such is the estimation of this stuffe, that manie become rich onelie with their new trade unto Murana (a towne neere to Venice situat on the Adriatike sea) from whence the verie best are dailie to be had, and such as for beautie doo well neare match the christall or the ancient Murrhina vasa, whereof now no man hath knowledge. And as this is seene in the gentilitie, so in the wealthie communaltie the like desire of glasse is not neglected.” Vol. I. p. 280.

To this interesting sketch a few particulars shall be added in order to render the picture more complete; and, in the first place, we shall give an account, from an eye-witness, of the ceremonies accompanying the dinner-table of Elizabeth. “While the Queen was still at prayers,” relates Hentzner, “we saw her table set out with the following solemnity :

“A gentleman entered the room bearing a rod, and along with him another who had a table-cloth, which, after they had both kneeled three times with the utmost veneration, he spread upon the table, and after kneeling again, they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a salt-seller, a plate and bread; when they had kneeled, as the others had done, and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired with the same ceremonies performed by the first. At last came an unmarried lady (we were told she was a countess) and along with her a married one, bearing a tasting knife; the former was dressed in white silk, who, when she had prostrated herself three times in the most graceful manner, approached the table, and rubbed the plates with bread and salt, with as much awe, as if the queen had been present: when they had waited there a little while, the yeomen of the guards entered, bareheaded, clothed in scarlet, with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plate, most of it gilt; these dishes were received by a gentleman in the same

order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster gave to each of the guard a mouthful to eat, of the particular dish he had brought for fear of any poison. During the time that this guard, which consists of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service, were bringing dinner, twelve trumpets and two kettle-drums made the hall ring for half an hour together. At the end of all this ceremonial a number of unmarried ladies appeared, who, with particular solemnity, lifted the meat off the table, and conveyed it into the queen's inner and more private chamber, where, after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the court. The queen dines and sups alone with very few attendants." P. 36, 37.

The strict regularity and temperance which prevailed in the court of Elizabeth, were by no means characteristic of that of her successor, who, in his convivial moments, too often grossly transgressed the bounds of sobriety. When Christian IV., King of Denmark, visited England in July, 1606, the carousals at the palace were carried to a most extravagant height, and their influence on the higher ranks was such, that "our good English nobles," remarks Harrington, "whom I never could get to taste good liquor, now follow the fashion, and wallow in beastly delights. The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication;" accusations which he fully substantiates whilst relating the following most ludicrous scene:—

"One day," says he, "a great feast was held, and, after dinner, the representation of Solomon his Temple, and the coming of the Queen of Sheba was made, or (as I may better say) was meant to have been made, before their Majesties, by device of the Earl of Salisbury and others.—But, alas! as all earthly things do fail to poor mortals in enjoyment, so did prove our presentment hereof. The Lady who did play the Queen's part, did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties; but, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, tho I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean. His Majesty then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the King would excuse her brevity: Faith was then all alone, for I am certain she was not joyned with good works, and left the court in a staggering condition: Charity came to the King's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed; in some sorte she made obeysance and brought giftes, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven had not already given his Majesty. She then returned to Hope and Faith, who were both sick and spewing in the lower hall. Next came Victory, in bright armour, and presented a rich sword to the King, who did not accept it, but put it by with his hand; and by a strange medley of versification, did endeavour to make suit to the King. But Victory did not triumph long; for, after much lamentable utterance, she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the anti-chamber. Now did Peace make entry, and strive to get foremoste to the King; but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her attendants; and much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming." The facetious Knight concludes his story by declaring that "in our Queen's days—I neer did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety, as I have now done."*

We have already mentioned in Part the First, Chapter the Fifth of this work, that the usual hour of dinner, among the upper classes, was eleven o'clock in the forenoon; and though Harrison, in the passage which we last quoted from him, describes the provisions as often brought to the tables of the nobility served on silver, yet wooden trenchers for plates were still frequently to be found at the most sumptuous tables; thus Harrington in 1592, giving directions to his servants, orders, "that no man waite at the table without a trencher in his hand, except it be upon good cause, on pain of 1d."†

* *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 349—352.

† *Ibid.* p. 106.

To the silver, gilt plate, and cut glass of Harrison, may be added the use of china, an article of luxury to which the Clown in *Measure for Measure* thus alludes:—"Your honours have seen such dishes; they are not china dishes, but very good dishes." Act. ii. sc. 1. A considerable quantity of china or porcelain had been brought into this country, during the reign of Elizabeth, as part of the cargo of some captured Spanish carracks. It appears, also, that carpet-cloth for tables was, towards the close of our period, dismissed for table linen, and that of a quality so fine, that Mrs. Otter, in Ben Jonson's "*Silent Woman*," which was first acted in 1609, laments having "stained a damask table-cloth, cost me eighteen pound." Act. iii. sc. 2.

With all these luxuries, the reader will be surprised to learn, that forks were not introduced into this country before 1611. Knives had been in general use since the year 1563, but for the former the fingers had been the sole substitute. The honour of this cleanly fashion, must be given to that singular traveller Thomas Coryat, who in his "*Crudities*" informs us, that he found forks common in Italy.

"Hereupon," says he, "I myself thought good to imitate the Italian fashion, by this *forked* cutting of meate, not only while I was in Italy, but also in Germany, and oftentimes in *England* since I came home; being once quipped for that frequent using of my *forke*, by a certaine learned gentleman, a familiar friend of mine, one M. Laurence Whitaker, who in his merry humour doubted not to call me at table *Furcifer*, only for using a *forke* at feeding, but for no other cause."

The utility of the practice was soon acknowledged, for we find Jonson, in 1614, speaking of their adoption in his "*Devil Is An Ass*," where Meercraft, having mentioned his "project of the forks," Sledge exclaims—

" Forks? what be they?
Meer. The laudable use of *forks*,
 Brought into custom here, as they are in Italy,
 To th' sparing o' napkins." Act v. sc. 4.

To the articles of provision enumerated by Harrison, we may add, that the bread of this period was of many various kinds, and sometimes peculiarly fine, especially that made at York.

"Bred," says a physician who wrote in 1572, "of divers graines, of divers formes, in divers places be used:—some in forme of manchet, used of the gentility: some of greate loves, as is usual among yeomanry, some betweene both, as with the franklings: some in forme of cakes, as at weddings: some rondes of hogs, as at upsittings: some simnels, cracknels, and bnnns, as in the Lent: some in brode cakes, as the oten cakes in Kendall on yrons: some on slate stones as in the hye peke: some in frying pans as in Darbyshyre: some betweene yrons as wapons: some in round cakes as bysket for the ships. But these and all other the mayne bread of York excelleth, for that it is of the finest floure of the wheat well tempered, best baked, a patterne of all others the fineste." *

Dinners had attained a degree of epicurism which rival those of the present day; three courses, of which the second consisted of game, and the third of pastry, creams, and confections, together with a dessert, including marchpane (a cake composed of filberts, almonds, pistacho-nuts, pine-kernels, sugar of roses, and flour), marmalades, pomegranates, oranges, citrons, apples, pears, raisins, dates, nuts, grapes, etc. etc., were common in the houses of the opulent, nor was any expense spared in procuring the most luxurious dainties. "Who will not admire," remarks an Essayist of this age, "our nice dames of London, who must have cherries at twenty shillings a pound, and pescods at five shillings a pecke, huske without pease? Yong rabbettes of a spanne, and chickens of an inch!" †

* "The benefit of the auncient Bathes of Buckstones, which cureth most greevous sicknesses, never before published: compiled by John Jones, Phisition. At the King's Mede nigh Darby. Anno salutis 1572, &c." bl. l.—Vide *Censura Literaria*, vol. x. p. 277.

† *The Passions of the Minde*. By Th. W. (Thomas Wright.) London, printed by V. S. for W. B. 1601, small 8vo.

To such a height, indeed, had sensuality in eating arisen among the courtiers of James the First, that Osborne, in his "Traditional Memorials" on the reign of that monarch, informs us,

"The *Earl of Carlisle* was one of the *Quorum*, that brought in the vanity of *Ante-suppers* not heard of in our forefathers time, and for ought I have read, or at least remember, unpractised by the most luxurious tyrants. The manner of which was, to have a board covered at the first entrance of the guests with dishes as high as a tall man could well reach, filled with the choicest and dearest viands sea and land could afford: and all this once seen and having feasted the eyes of the invited, was in a manner thrown away, and fresh set on the same height; having only this advantage of the other, that it was hot. I cannot forget one of the attendants of the K. that at a feast, made by this monster in excess, eat to his single share a whole pie reckoned to my Lord at ten pounds." *

The extravagance and excess of refection with regard to eatables, must, however, we are sorry to say, yield to those which accompanied the use, or rather the abuse, of vinous liquors. The propensity of the English of his times to drunkenness, has been frequently commented on by Shakspeare; Iago, in reference to a drinking-catch which he had just sung, says, "I learned it in England, where (indeed) they are most potent in potting; your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander,—Drink, ho!—are nothing to your English.

Cass. Is your Englishman so expert in his drinking?

Iago. Why, he drinks you, with facility, your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit, ere the next pottle can be filled;" (act ii. sc. 3.) a charge which seems to be confirmed by the sober testimony of Gascoigne.—"The Almaynes," he observes, "with their smale Rhenish wine, are contented; but we must have March beere, double beere, dagger ale, bracket, etc. Yea, wine itself is not sufficient, but sugar, lemons, and spices must be drowned therein!" Yet, it is but fair to subjoin, as an acknowledged fact, that we derived this *vinosity*, as Heywood terms it, from the Danes; "they," says he, "have made a profession thereof from antiquity, and are the first upon record that brought their wassel-bowles and elbowe-deep healthes into this land."

Of the consumption of wine a striking estimate may be formed, from part of a letter addressed by the Earl of Shrewsbury to the Marquis of Winchester and Sir Walter Mildmay, dated January, 1569:—

"It may please you to understaund," says His Lordship, "that whereas I have had a certen ordinary allowaunce of wine, amongs other noble men, for expenses in my howsehold, w^out imposte; The charg's daily that I do nowe susteyn, and have done all this yere past, well knownen by reason of the Quene of Scotts, are so grete therein as I am compelled to be now a suter unto yow that ye woll please to have a friendlie considerac'on unto the necessitie of my large expenses. Truly two tonnes in a monthe have not hitherto sufficed ordinarily."

"This passage," observes Mr. Lodge, "will serve to correct a vulgar error, relating to the consumption of wine in those days, which, instead of being less, appears to have been, at least in the houses of the great, even more considerable than that of the present time. The good people who tell us that Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour breakfasted on roast beef, generally add, that wine was then used in England as a medicine, for that it was sold only by the *apothecaries*. The latter assertion, though founded on a fact, seems to have led to a mistake in the former; for the word Apothecary, from the Greek *Αποθηκη*, *repositorium*, is applicable to any shopkeeper, or warehouseman, and was probably once used in that general sense." †

It appears, however, from Decker's Tracts, that apothecaries, in the modern acceptation of the word, sold both wine and tobacco, and their shops formed the fashionable lounge of the day:—"here you must observe to know in what state tobacco is in town, better than the merchants; and to discourse of the apothecaries where it is to be sold; and to be able to speak of their wines, as readily as

* The Works of Francis Osborn, Esq. 8vo. 9th edit. p. 475.

† Illustrations of British History, &c., vol. ii. p. 27.

the apothecary himself reading the barbarous hand of a doctor." * "Some lie in ambush, to note what apothecary's shop he (the gallant) resorts to every morning." †

The variety of wines in the days of Shakspeare has not since been exceeded, or, perhaps, even equalled. Harrison mentions fifty-six French wines, and thirty-six Spanish, Italian, etc., to which must be added several home-made wines, such as Ypocras, Clarey, Braket, etc. etc., for which receipts may be found in Arnold's Chronicle.

Among the foreign wines used at this period, none have attracted so much notice, or so much controversy, as the celebrated beverage of Falstaff, Sack. Whether this was a dry or a sweet wine has been left undecided by the commentators, after much elaborate and contradictory disquisition. If we may repose, however, on the authority of Gervase Markham's "English Housewife," a book published very shortly after the death of Shakspeare, and probably written several years before that event, a book professing to contain "the opinions of the greatest Physicians," many years antecedent to the Dedication which includes this assertion, the question must be considered as finally settled. This author, in his fourth chapter, entitled, "The ordering, preserving, and helping of all sorts of Wines, and first of the choice of sweet Wines," opens the subject by declaring, that he had derived his knowledge on wines from a vintner "proffest skilful in the trade," and he then immediately proceeds, addressing the housewife, "to speak first of the election of *sweet* wines; "she must," says he, "be carefull that the Malmseys be full wines, pleasant, well hewed and fine: that Bastard be fat, and strong, if it be tawney it skills not: for the tawny Bastards be always the sweetest. Muscadine must be great, pleasant and strong with a sweet scent, and with Amber colour. Sack if it be Seres (as it should be) you shall know it by the mark of a cork burned on one side of the bung, and they be ever full gage, and so are other Sacks, and the longer they lye, the better they be." ‡

From this passage we learn three circumstances relative to Sack: 1stly, that Sack was a sweet wine; 2dly, that Seres, or Xeres, Sack, or what Shakspeare, in 1597, calls "a good sherris-sack," a wine manufactured at Xeres in Spain, was the most esteemed of its kind; and, 3dly, that other Sacks were in use in this country. Still further light is thrown upon this topic in a subsequent page, where we are told, when enumerating the sweet wines in contradistinction to those of a sharp taste, that Sacks are of three species—"Your best Sacks are of Seres in Spain, your smaller of Galicia and Portugall, your strong Sacks are of the Islands of the Canaries, and of Malligo." § It is, therefore, to be inferred, that, though all these Sacks were sweet, the sweetest, as well as the strongest, were the Canary and Malaga; next to these in saccharine impregnation, and best in flavour, the Xeres; and lastly, the weakest and least sweet, were the Galicia and Portugal.

The conclusion we consequently draw from these premises is, that the Sherris-Sack of Falstaff was Spanish Xeres, a wine not dry, like our modern Sherry, but sweet, and though not so strong or so sweet as the Sacks brought from Canary and Malaga, superior in flavour to both.

It may be objected to this deduction, that if Sherris-Sack were a sweet wine, it would not have been necessary to add sugar to it, an article which Sir John ever mingled with his favourite potation. This will not prove valid, however, when we recollect that, in the first place, Xeres was not the sweetest of the Sacks, and, in the second, that in Shakspeare's time it was the custom to mix sugar with every species of wine; "gentlemen garrawse," observes Fynes Moryson, "only in wine, with which they mix sugar, which I never observed in any other place or kingdom to be used for that purpose. And because the taste of the English is thus delighted with sweetness, the wines in taverns (for I speak not of mer-

* Gull's Horn-book, 1609, reprint, p. 119, 120.

† English Housewife, p. 112, 113.

‡ English Villanies, &c. first printed in 1616.

§ *Ibid.* p. 118.

chantes or gentlemen's cellars) are commonly mixed at the filling thereof, to make them pleasant." * A similar partiality for sugar in wine is noticed by Paul Hentzner, as one of the peculiarities of the English; and from these passages Mr. Reed deduces the legitimate inference that the fondness of the English nation for sugar, at this epoch, was so great as to induce them to mix it even with sweet wines; "if," says he, "the English drank only rough wine with sugar, there appears nothing extraordinary, or worthy of particular notice.—The addition of sugar, even to sack, might, perhaps, to a taste habituated to sweets, operate only in a manner to improve the flavour of the wine."

We find also from Sir John's comments on his favourite liquor, that he added not only sugar, but a toast to it; that he had an insuperable aversion to its being mulled with eggs, vehemently exclaiming, "I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage;" and that he abominated its sophistication with lime, declaring that "a coward is worse than a cup of sack with lime in it;" † an ingredient which the vintners used to increase its strength and durability.

To this deterioration, our witty Knight, as his convivial hours were usually spent in taverns, was, of course, peculiarly subject. Houses of this description were very numerous in our author's days, and, there is reason to think, fully as much frequented as are similar places in the present age. The *Boar's Head Tavern* in Eastcheap, and the *Mermaid* in Cornhill, immortalised in the writings of Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, and Fletcher, are enumerated in a long list of taverns given us in an old black-letter quarto, entitled "*Newes from Bartholomew Fayre*;" ‡ and to these we must add, as of equal poetical celebrity, the *Tabard Inn* or *Tavern*, noticed by Stowe, in 1598, as the most ancient in Southwark, and endeared to us as the "*Hosterie*" of the never-to-be-forgotten pilgrims, in that delightful work, the "*Canterbury Tales*" of Chaucer.

A tavern, says a writer who lived in these times, and who published in 1628, "is the common consumption of the afternoon, and the murderer or maker-away of a rainy day.—To give you the total reckoning of it; it is the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the inns-of-court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness, and the citizen's curtesy. It is the study of sparkling wits, and a cup of canary their book." §

At these places were regular *ordinaries*, which Decker tells us were of three kinds; namely, "an ordinary of the largest reckoning, whither most of your courtly gallants do resort;" a twelve-penny ordinary frequented by "the justice of peace or young knight;" and a three-penny ordinary, "to which your London usurer, your stale batchelor, and your thrifty attorney do resort." **

From the same author we also learn, that it was usual in taverns, especially in the city, to send presents of wine from one room to another, as a complimentary

* Itinerary, 1617. Part III. p. 152.

† It appears, that Sack, in Shakspeare's time, was sold at eight-pence halfpenny a quart—for in Falstaff's Tavern-bill occurs the following *item*; "Sack, two gallons, 5s. 8d."

‡ The title-page of this curious poem is lost, but the passage alluded to, is as follows:—

"There hath beene great sale and utterance of wine,
Besides beere and ale, and ipocras fine,
In every country, region, and nation;
Chiefely at Billingsgate, at the *Salutation*,
And *Bores Head*, neere London Stone,
The Swan at Dowgate, a taverne well knowne,
The Miter in Cheape, and then the *Bull Head*,
And many like places that make noses red;
The Bores Head in old Fish-street, *three Cranes* in the Vintree,
And now of late St. Martin's in the Sentree;
The Wind-mill in Lothburry, *the Ship* at the Exchange,
King's Head in New Fish-streete, where roysters do range;
The Mermaid in Cornhill, *Red Lion* in the Strand,
Three Tuns Newgate Market, Old Fish-street at *the Swan*."

§ Earle's Microcosmography, reprint by Bliss, p. 39, 40.

** Gull's Horn-book, reprint by Nott, p. 109, 127, 128.

mark of friendship:—"Enquire," directs he, "what gallants sup in the next room; and, if they be any of your acquaintance, do not you, after the city fashion, send them in a pottle of wine and your name." This custom, too, is recorded by Shakspeare, as a mode of introduction to a stranger, where Bardolph, at the Garter Inn, Windsor, addressing Falstaff, says,—“Sir John, there's one master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack;” a passage which Mr. Malone has illustrated by the following nearly contemporary anecdote:—"Ben Jonson," he relates, "was at a tavern, and in comes Bishop Corbet (but not so then), into the next room. Ben Jonson calls for a quart of raw wine, and gives it to the tapster. 'Sirrah,' says he, 'carry this to the gentleman in the next chamber, and tell him, I sacrifice my service to him.' The fellow did, and in those words. 'Friend,' says Dr. Corbet, 'I thank him for his love; but 'pr'ythee tell him from me that he is mistaken; for sacrifices are always burnt.'"

The most singular and offensive practice, however, at least to modern manners, which occurred at this period in taverns, a practice common, too, even among the higher ranks, is likewise related by Decker, when giving advice "How a Gallant should behave himself in an Ordinary" of the first class:—

"You may rise in dinner time," he tells his "courtly gallant," "to ask for a *closestool*, protesting to all the gentlemen that it costs you an hundred pounds a year in physick, besides the annual pension which your wife allows her doctor; and, if you please, you may, as your great French lord doth, *invite some special friend of yours from the table to hold discourse with you as you sit in that withdrawing chamber*; from whence being returned again to the board, you shall sharpen the wits of all the eating gallants about you, and do them great pleasure to ask what pamphlets or poems a man might think fittest to wipe his tail with."*

Gross as this habit now appears to us, it was prevalent upon the Continent until nearly the close of the last century.

To the reign of Elizabeth is to be attributed the introduction of a luxury, which has since become almost universal, the custom of using, or, as it was then called, of taking tobacco. This herb, which was first brought into England by Sir Francis Drake, about the year 1586, met with an early and violent opposition, and gave birth to a multitude of invectives and satires, among which the most celebrated is King James's "Counterblast to Tobacco." This monarch entertained the most rooted antipathy to the use of tobacco in any form, and closes his treatise by asserting that it is "a custom loathsome to the eye, hatefull to the nose, harmfull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the blacke stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoake of the pit that is bottomless."† He also tells us in another work, that were he to invite the devil to a dinner, "he should have these three dishes—1, a pig; 2, a poole of ling and mustard; and 3, a pipe of tobacco for digesture."

Tobacco may be said, indeed, to have made many inroads in domestic cleanliness, and, on this account, to have deservedly incurred the dislike of that large portion of the female sex on whom the charge of household economy devolved.

"Surely," says James, "smoke becomes a kitchen farre better than a dining chamber," a remark which is as applicable now as it was then; but we cannot help smiling when he adds, with his usual credulity, "and yet it makes a kitchen also oftentimes in the inward parts of men, soyling and infecting them, with an unctuous and oily kind of soote, as hath bene found in some great tobacco takers, that after their death were opened."

Such were, indeed, the tales in common circulation among the lower orders,

* Gull's Horn-book, p. 121, 122.—"Let us here remark," adds Dr. Nott, in a note on this passage, "that J. Harington is to be considered as the inventor of that cleanly comfort the water-closet; which gave rise to his witty little tract above-mentioned (*Metamorphosis of Ajax*, a jakes, 1596), wherein he humorously recommends the same to Q. Elizabeth; and for which, by the way, he was banished her court."

† The Workes of the most High and Mighty Prince, James, &c. &c. folio, 1616. p. 222.

and which Ben Jonson has very humorously put into the mouth of Cob in Every Man in his Humour :—

“By Gods me,” says the water-bearer, “I marle what pleasure or felicity they have in taking this roguish tobacco! It’s good for nothing but to choak a man, and fill him full of smoke and embers : there were four died out of one house last week with taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight ; one of them, they say, will ne’er scape it ; he voided a bushel of soot yesterday, upward and downward. By the stocks, an’ there were no wiser men than I, I’d have it present whipping, man or woman, that should but deal with a tobacco-pipe ; why, it will stifle them all in the end, as many as use it ; it’s little better than ratsbane or rosaker.” Act. iii. sc. 5.—

It would appear that the prejudices against the use of this narcotic required much time for their extirpation ; for Burton, who wrote about thirty years after its introduction, and at the very close of the Shakspearean era, seems as violent against the common use of tobacco as even James himself :—

“A good vomit,” says he, “I confesse, a vertuous herbe, if it be well qualified, opportunely taken, and medicinally used, but as it is commonly used by most men, which take it as Tinkers do ale, ’tis a plague, a mischiefe, a violent purger of goods, lands, health, hellish, devilish damn’d tobacco, the ruine and overthrow of body and soule.” *

Notwithstanding this abuse, however, and the edicts of King James forbidding its consumption in all ale-houses, tobacco soon acquired such general favour, that Stowe tells us in his Annals, “it was commonly used by *most* men and *many* women ;” and James, appealing to his subjects, exclaims,—“Now how you are by this custome disabled in your goods, let the gentry of this land beare witness, some of them bestowing three, some foure hundred pounds a yeere upon this precious stinke ;” a sum so enormous, that we must conclude them to have been as determined smokers as the Buckinghamshire parson recorded by Lilly, who “was so given over to tobacco and drink, that when he had no tobacco, he would cut the bell-ropes and smoke them !”

Snuff-taking was as much in fashion as smoking ; and the following passage from Decker proves, that the gallants of his day were as extravagant and ridiculous in their use of it as our modern beaux, whether we regard the splendour of their boxes, or their affectation in applying the contents ; it appears also to have been customary to take snuff immediately before dinner. “Before the meat come smoking to the board, our gallant must draw out his tobacco-box, ‘and’ the ladle for the cold snuff into the nostril,—all which artillery may be of gold or silver, if he can reach to the price of it ;—then let him shew his several tricks in taking it, as the whiff, the ring, etc. for these are complements that gain gentlemen no mean respect.” † “It is singular,” remarks Dr. Nott, alluding to the general use of tobacco at this period, “when the introduction of this new indulgence had so engaged the pen of almost every contemporary playwright and pamphleteer, nay, even of royalty itself, that Shakspeare should have been totally silent upon it.” ‡

The residue of the Domestic Economy of this era may be included under the articles of servants and miscellaneous household arrangements.

In the days of Elizabeth servants were more numerous, and considered as a more essential mark of gentility, than at any subsequent period. “The English,” observes Hentzner, “are lovers of shew, liking to be followed wherever they go by whole troops of servants, who wear their master’s arms in silver, fastened to their left arms.” § They were, also, usually distinguished by blue coats ; thus Grumio, enquiring for his master’s servants, says,—“Call forth Nathaniel, Joseph, Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop, and the rest ; let their heads be sleekly combed, their blue coats brushed.” We learn, however, from Fynes Moryson, that both silver badges and blue coats went out of fashion in the reign of James the First ; “the servants of gentlemen,” he informs us, “were wont to weare

* Anatomie of Melancholy, p. 235.

† Reprint of Decker’s Gull’s Horn-book, p. 17, note 15.

‡ Gull’s Horn-book, p. 119.

§ Travels, 8vo. p. 63.

blew coates, with their master's badge of silver on the left sleeve, but now they most commonly weare clokes garded with lace, all the servants of one family wearing the same livery for colour and ornament."

The very strict regulations to which servants were subjected in the sixteenth century, and the admirable order perserved in the household of the upper classes at that time, will be illustrated in a very satisfactory and entertaining manner, by the "Orders for Household Servantes; first devised by John Haryngton, in the yeare 1566, and renewed by John Haryngton, Sonne of the saide John, in the yeare 1592; the saide John, the Sonne, being then High Shrieve of the County of Somerset."

"Imprimis, That no servant bee absent from praier, at morning or evening without a lawfull excuse, to be alledged within one day after, upon payne to forfeit for every tyme 2d.—2. *Item*, That none sweare any othe, upon paine for every othe 1d.—3. *Item*, That no man leave any doore open, that he findeth shut, without there bee cause, upon payne for every time 1d.—4. *Item*, That none of the men be in bed, from our Lady-day to Michaelmas, after 6 of the clock in the morning; nor out of his bed after 10 of the clock at night; nor, from Michaelmas till our Lady-day, in bed after 7 in the morning; nor out after 9 at night, without reasonable cause, on paine of 2d.—5. *Item*, That no man's bed be unmade, nor fire or candle-box uncleane, after 8 of the clock in the morning, on paine of 1d.—6. *Item*, That no man make water within either of the courts, upon paine of, every time it shalbe proved, 1d.—7. *Item*, That no man teach any of the children any unhonest speeche, or baudie word, or othe, on paine of 4d.—8. *Item*, That no man waite at the table, without a trencher in his hand, except it be upon some good cause, on paine of 1d.—9. *Item*, That no man appointed to waite at my table, be absent that meale, without reasonable cause, on paine of 1d.—10. " *Item*, If any man breake a glasse, hee shall answer the price thereof out of his wages; and, if it bee not known who breake it, the buttler shall pay for it, on paine of 12d.—11. *Item*, The table must bee covered halfe an hour before 11 at dinner, and 6 at supper, or before, on paine of 2d.—12. *Item*, That meate bee readie at 11, or before, at dinner; and 6, or before, at supper, on paine of 6d.—13. *Item*, That none be absent, without leave or good cause, the whole day, or any part of it, on paine of 4d.—14. *Item*, That no man strike his fellow, on paine of losse of service; nor revile or threaten, or provoke another to strike, on paine of 12d.—15. *Item*, That no man come to the kitchen without reasonable cause, on paine of 1d. and the cook likewyse to forfeit 1d.—16. *Item*, That none toy with the maids, on paine of 4d.—17. *Item*, That no man weare foule shirt on Sunday, nor broken hose or shooes, or doublett without buttons, on paine of 1d.—18. *Item*, That when any strainger goeth hence, the chamber be drest up againe within 4 hours after, on paine of 1d.—19. *Item*, That the hall bee made cleane every day, by eight in the winter, and seaven in the sommer, on paine of him that should do it to forfeit 1d.—20. That the court-gate bee shutt each meale, and not opened during dinner and supper, without just cause, on paine the porter to forfeit for every time 1d.—21. *Item*, That all stayrs in the house, and other rooms that neede shall require, bee made cleane on Fryday after dinner, on paine of forfeiture of every on whome it shall belong unto, 3d.—"All which sommes shalbe duly paide each quarter-day out of their wages, and bestowed on the poore, or other godly use."

To the tribe of household servants, must be added, as a constant inmate in the houses of the great, during the life of Shakspeare, and, indeed, to the close of the reign of Charles I., that motley personage, the Domestic Fool, who was an essential part of the entertainment of the fire-side, not only in the palace and the castle, but in the tavern and the brothel.

The character of the "all-licens'd fool" has been copied from the life, with his usual naïveté and precision, and with an inexhaustible fund of wit, in many of the plays of our poet; yet, perhaps, we shall nowhere find a more condensed and faithful picture of the manners of this once indispensable source of domestic pleasantries, than what has been given us by Dr. Lodge:

"This fellow," says he, "in person is comely, in apparell courtly, but in behaviour a very ape, and no man; his studie is to coine *bitter jeasts*, or to shew antique motions, or to sing *baudie sonnets and ballads*: give him a little wine in his head, he is continually flearing and making of mouthes: he laughs intemperately at every little occasion, and dances about the house, leaps over tables, out-skips mens heads, trips up his companion's heeles, burns sack with a candle, and

hath all the feats of a lord of misrule in the countrie : feed him in his humor, you shall have his heart, in meere kindnesse he will hug you in his armes, kisse you on the cheeke, and rapping out an horrible oth, crie God's soule Tum I love you, you know my poore heart, come to my chamber for a pipe of tobacco, there lives not a man in this world that I more honour. In these ceremonies you shall know his courting, and it is a speciall mark of him at the table, he sits and makes faces." *

On the passages in this quotation distinguished by Italics, it will be necessary to offer a brief comment. From Shakspeare we learn that the apparel of the domestic fool was of two kinds; he had either a parti-coloured coat fastened round the body by a girdle, with close breeches, and hose on each leg of different colours, or he wore a long petticoat dyed with curious tints, and fringed with yellow. With both dresses was generally connected a hood, covering the whole head, falling over part of the breast and shoulders, and surmounted with asses ears, or a cockscomb. Bells and a bauble were the usual insignia of the character; the former either attached to the elbows, or the skirt of the coat, and the latter, consisting of a stick, decorated at one end with a carved fool's head, and having at the other an inflated bladder, an instrument either of sport or defence.

Bitter jests, provided they were so dressed up, or so connected with adjunctive circumstances, as to raise a laugh, were at all times allowed; but it was moreover expected, that their keenness or bitterness should be also allayed by a due degree of obliquity in the method of attack, by a careless, and, apparently, undesigning manner of delivery, and by a playful and frolic demeanour. For these purposes, fragments of sonnets and ballads were usually chosen by the fool, as a safe medium through which the necessary degree of concealment might be given, and the edge of his sarcasm duly abated; a practice of which Shakspeare has afforded us many instances, and especially in his Fool in King Lear, whose scraps of old songs fully exemplify the aim and scope of this favourite of our ancestors. †

A few household arrangements, in addition to those developed in Sir John Harrington's orders, shall terminate this branch of our subject.

We have seen, when treating of the domestic economy of the country squire, that it was usual to take their banquet or dessert in an arbour of the garden or orchard; and in town, the nobility and gentry immediately after dinner and supper adjourned to another room, for the purpose of enjoying their wine and fruit; this practice is alluded to by Shakspeare, in Romeo and Juliet; and Beaufort, in the "Unnatural Combat" of Massinger, says:—

" We'll *dine* in the great room, but let the music
And *banquet* be prepared here ;"

a custom which it is astonishing the delicacy and refinement of modern manners have not generally adopted.

As our ancestors, during the greater part of the period we are considering, possessed not the conveniency of eating with forks, and were, therefore, compelled to make use of their fingers, it became an essential point of good manners, to wash the hands immediately before dinner and supper, as well as afterwards: thus Petruchio, on the entrance of his servants with supper, says, addresssing his wife, —

" Come, Kate, and *wash*, and welcome heartily." Act iv. sc. 1.

In the fifteenth item of Harrington's Orders, we find that no man was allowed to come to the kitchen without reasonable cause, an injunction which may appear extraordinary; but, in those days, it was customary, in order to prevent the cook being disturbed in his important duties, to keep the rest of the men aloof, and, when dinner was ready, he summoned them to carry it on the table, by knocking

* Wit's Miserie and the World's Madnesse, 4to. 1599.

† We must here observe, that the Baron of Brandwardine's Fool, in *Waverley*, is an admirable copy of the character, as drawn by Shakspeare; and, as the work seems a faithful picture of existing manners in 1745, is a striking proof of the retention of this curious personage, until a recent period.

loudly on the dresser with his knife: thus in Massinger's "Unnatural Combat," Beaufort's steward says, —

"When the dresser, the cook's drum, thunders, Come on,
The service will be lost else;"

a practice which gave rise to the phraseology, "he knocks to the dresser," as synonymous with the annunciation that "dinner is ready."

It was usual, also, especially where the domestic fool was retained, to keep an ape or a monkey, as a companion for him, and he is frequently represented with this animal on his shoulders. Monkeys, likewise, appear to have been an indispensable part of a lady's establishment, and, accordingly, Ben Jonson, in his "Cynthia's Revels," represent one of his characters as asserting, "the gentleman (I'll undertake with him) is a man of fair living, and able to maintain a lady in her two caroches a day, besides pages, monkeys, parachitoes, with such attendants as she shall think meet for her turn." — Act iv. sc. 2.

Beside monkeys and parachitoes, this quotation also proves, that caroches, a species of coach, were common in 1600, when Jonson's play was first acted. The coach and caroch, vehicles differing probably rather in size than form, are thus distinguished by Greene, who in his "Tu Quoque," 1641, speaks of

—————"the keeping of a coach
For country, and caroch for London;"

and, indeed, in 1595, they seem to have been equally general, for the author of "Quippes for upstart newfangled Gentlewomen," says:—

"Our wantons now in coaches dash
From house to house, from street to street."*

The era of their introduction into this country has been recorded by Taylor, the water-poet.

"In the year 1564," he remarks, "one William Boonen, a Dutchman, brought *first* the use of coaches hither, and the said Boonen was Queene Elizabeth's coachman; for indeede a coach was a strange monster in those days, and the sight of it put both horse and man into amazement: some said it was a great crab-shell brought out of China, and some imagined it to be one of the Pagan Temples, in which the Cannibals adored the divell: but at last those doubts were cleared, and coach-making became a substantial trade."†

So substantial, indeed, had this trade become in 1601, that on the 7th of November of the same year, an act was introduced into the House of Lords, to restrain the excessive and superfluous use of coaches within this realm; it was rejected, however, on the second reading, and the trade of coach-making went on progressively increasing.

The extravagancy of domestic economy, with regard to these machines, and the servants who were deemed necessary, as their accompaniment, is strikingly depicted in the following extract from a letter written shortly after their marriage, by Lady Compton, to her husband, William Lord Compton, a few years subsequent to the death of Shakspeare. After several *items* equally moderate with those we are going to transcribe, she thus proceeds:

"Alsoe, I will have 6 or 8 gentlemen; and I will have my twoe coaches, one lyned with velvet to myselfe, wth 4 very sayre horses, and a coche for my woemen, lyned wth sweete cloth, one laced wth gold, the other wth scarlett, and laced with watched lace and silver, wth 4 good horses. Alsoe, I will have twoe coachmen, one for my owne coche, the other for my woemen. Alsoe, att any tyme when I travayle, I will be allowed not only carroches, and spare horses for me and my woemen, but I will have such carryadgs, as shal be fittinge for all orderly; not pestringe my things wth my woemens, nor theirs wth either chambermayds, or theirs wth wase maids. Alsoe, for

* Restituta, vol. iii. p. 258.

† The Works of Taylor, 1630. p. 240.

laundresses, when I travayle I will have them sent away before wth the carryadgs to see all safe, and the chambermayds I will have goe before wth the groomes, that a chamber may be ready, sweete and cleane. Alsoe, for that yt is indecent to croud upp myself wth my gentl. usher in my coache, I will have him to have a convenyent horse to attend me either in citty or country. And I must have 2 footemen. And my desire is, that you defray all the chardges for me. *

Of the Manners and Customs of this period, the next branch of our present enquiry, we shall open a short review, by sketching the prominent features of Elizabeth's personal character, which must, necessarily, have had great influence, not only on her courtiers, but on society at large. As a monarch, she was, with few exceptions, truly worthy of admiration; but, as a woman, she often exhibits such a series of weakness and frailties, as must excite astonishment, as well from the force of contrast, as from their own turpitude and folly.

The most valuable and praiseworthy part of her private character, her literary accomplishments, her love of learning, and her encouragement of letters, together with the influence which they exerted over the minds of her subjects, have been considered, at some length, in this work, Part II. chap. 2, and to the favourable side of the picture, we must here add, that she was equally eminent for some acquirements more peculiarly feminine. Among these, her skill in needle-work has been more than once particularly celebrated, her excellence in which stimulated the ladies of her reign to more than ordinary exertion in this useful department. "The various kinds of needle-work practised by our indefatigable grandmothers," observes Mr. Douce, "if enumerated, would astonish even the most industrious of our modern ladies," and he adds, that "many curious books of patterns for lace and all sorts of needle-work were formerly published." †

But this rare example, in a monarch, of industry and economy, and the still more important acquisitions of literature and science, were overwhelmed by a host of foibles, among which, none were more remarkable than her extreme vanity and coquetry, and at a period too, when she had reason to expect, from her infirmities, and the common law of nature, that death was not far distant. To be thought beautiful, young, and agile, and an object of amorous affection, to the last moment of her existence, seems to have been her chief ambition as a woman; nor could any language on these topics, when addressed to her, be too complimentary, amatory, or glowing. When sixty years of age, Raleigh thus speaks of her, in a letter intended for her perusal:—"I that was wont to see her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph, sometimes sitting in the shade, like a goddess, sometimes singing like an angel, sometimes playing like Orpheus; behold the sorrow of this world! once amiss hath bereaved me of all;" ‡ and when sixty-eight, Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy of Ireland, thus addresses her:—"When I have done all that I can, the uttermost effects of my labours doe appeare so little to my own zeale to doe more, that I am often ashamed to present them unto your faire and royall eyes. I beseeche your Majestie to thinke, that in a matter of so great importance, my affection will not suffer me to commit so grosse a fault against your service, as to doe any thing, for the which I am not able to give you a very good account, the which, above all things, I desire to do at your owne royall feete, and that your service here, may give me leave to fill my eyes with their onely deere and desired object." § It was at the same advanced period

* Vide Gifford's Massinger, vol. iv. pp. 43, 44, note ex Autog. in Bibl. Harl.

† Illustrations, vol. i. p. 94.—Mr. Douce gives the title-pages of several publications of this kind, in 1588, 1591, 1598, and 1599; and, lastly, describes one called "The needles excellency," illustrated with copper-plates, and adds,—"prefixed to the patterns are sundry poems in commendation of the needle, and describing the characters of ladies who have been eminent for their skill in needle-work, among which are Queen Elizabeth and the Countess of Pembroke. These poems were composed by John Taylor, the water poet. It appears that the work (in 1640) had gone through twelve impressions, and yet a copy is now scarcely to be met with. This may be accounted for by supposing that such books were generally cut to pieces, and used by women to work upon or transfer to their samplers.—It appears to have been originally published in the reign of James the First." P. 96.

‡ Chalmers's Apology, p. 45, from Murden, p. 657. § Moryson's Itinerary, p. 233.

of life, too, when the sister of Lord Essex, interceding for her brother's life, tells Her Majesty, — "Early did I hope this morning, to have had mine eyes blessed with your majesty's beauty.—That her brother's life, his love, his service to her beauties, did not deserve so hard a punishment. That he would be disabled from ever serving again his sacred goddess! whose excellent beauties and perfections ought to feel more compassion."

Her affectation of youth, in order to render language such as this somewhat appropriate, was carried to the most ridiculous excess; "there is almost none," remarks Harrington, "that wayted in Queene Elizabeth's court, and observed any thing, but can tell that it pleased her much to seeme and to be thought, and to be told, that *she looked younge*;" and he then relates, in illustration of his assertion, that when Bishop Rudd preached before the Queen, in Lent, 1596, after giving an arithmetical description, with a manifest allusion to Her Majesty, of the grand climacterical year, he put a prayer into the mouth of the Queen, in which she is represented as quoting, with reference to herself, the following passage from Ecclesiastes: When the grinders shall be few in number, and they wax darke that looke out of the windowes, etc., and the daughters of singing shall be abased; but, the sermon being concluded, "the Queene (as the manner was) opened the window (of her closet), but she was so far from giving him thanks, or good countenance, that she said plainly, 'he should have kept his arithmetick for himselfe; but I see (said she) the greatest clerks are not the wisest men;' and so went away for the time discontented." Three days afterwards, however, she declared before Harrington and her courtiers, that "the good bishop was deceived in supposing she was so decayed in her limbs and senses, as himselfe, perhaps, and other of that age are wont to be; she thankt God that neither her stomache nor strength, nor her voyce for singing, nor fingering for instruments, nor lastly, her sight was any whit decayed." *

Her strength and agility, she endeavoured to prove, were not diminished, by dancing, or attempting to dance, to nearly the end of her reign. Being present at Lord Herbert's marriage, in 1600, after supper, dancing commenced by ladies and gentlemen in masques; and Mrs. Fetton, one of the masquers, "went to the Queen, and wooed her to dawnce. Her Majesty asked what she was? Affection, she said. Affection, said the Queen, is false. Yet her Majestie rose and dawnced?" † She was now in her sixty-ninth year!

Nor was she less artful than vain; cunning and finesse might be often necessary in her political capacity, but she carried the same wiliness and duplicity into all the relations of private life. Sir John Harrington has admirably drawn her disposition in these respects, and has painted her blandishments, her mutability of temper, and her deceptive conduct, with a masterly pencil.

"Hir mynde," he observes, "was oftime like the gentle aire that comethe from the westerly pointe in a summer's morn; 'twas sweete and refreshinge to all arounde her;—again, she coulde pute forthe suche alteracions,—as leste no doubtynge whose daughter she was.—By art and nature together so blended, it was difficulte to fynde hir right humour at any tyme;—for few knew how to aim their shaft against her cunning.—I have seen her smile," he adds, "soothe with great semblance of good likinge to all arounde, and cause everie one to open his moste inwarde thought to her; when, on a sudden, she would ponder in pryvate on what had passed, write down all their opinions, draw them out as occasion required, and sometyme disprove to their faces what had been delivered a month before. Hence she knew every one's parte, and by thus *fishinge*, as Hatton sayed, she caught many poor fish, who little knew what snare was laid for them." ‡

Of her boundless inclination to circumvent and deceive, a most ludicrous instance is related by Sir Arthur Wheldon, who tells us, that when Sir Roger Aston was sent with letters from James to the Queen (which was often the case), "he did never come to deliver any—but he was placed in the Lobby; the hangings

* Nugæ Antiquæ, vol. ii. p. 216—218.

‡ Nugæ Antiquæ, vol. i. p. 355, 357—359.

† Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. ii.

being turned him (lifted up), where he might see the Queene dancing to a little fiddle, which was to no other end, than he should tell his master by her youthfull disposition, how likely he was to come to the possession of the Crown he so much thirsted after." *

Extreme jealousy was another leading feature in the manners of Elizabeth, which, far from being the result of her exalted rank, was, indeed, most apparent in her domestic life and relations. She could bear no female near her who, in beauty, accomplishments, or dress, was likely either to surpass or rival her; and the death of the unfortunate Mary may be attributed rather to an inextinguishable envy of her personal charms, than to any apprehensions of the establishment of her claim to the throne of England. How anxious she was to be thought more beautiful and accomplished than her sister Queen, is vividly delineated by Sir John Melvill, who, in his numerous interviews with Elizabeth, during his residence in London, describes her as changing her dress for him every day; as dancing before him, and playing on the virginals, merely for the purpose of ascertaining whether he thought she or Mary most excelled in dress, dancing, and music. She even went so far as to enquire, whether he considered her hair or his mistress's to be the fairest and most entitled to admiration, and, at length, asked him which was tallest, and, on his answering, that the Scottish Queen surpassed her in height,—“Then,” saith she, “she is too high; for I myself am neither too high, nor too low.”

Nothing is better known in our history than Elizabeth's personal chastisement of the unhappy Earl of Essex; and so little, indeed, was she accustomed, on any occasion, to the control of her passions, that her courtiers daily dreaded similar inflictions. “The Queene seemede troubled to daye,” says Harrington; “Hatton came out from her presence with ill countenance, and pulled me aside by the girdle, and saide, in secret waie, ‘If you have any suite to daie, I praye you put it aside, the sunne doth not shine.’ Tis this accursed Spanishe businesse; so will not I adventure her Highnesse choller, leste she shoulde collar me also.” †

Even in the expression of her dislike on such trivial matters as the cut of a coat, or the depth of a fringe, she spared neither the public exposure of her courtiers, nor the adoption of the most masculine and vindictive contempt. “The Queene loveth to see me,” says Harrington, “in my laste frize jerkin, and saithe ’tis well enough cutt. I will have another made liken to it. I do remember she spit on Sir Mathew's fringed clothe, and said, the fooles wit was gone to ragges.—Heav'n spare me from suche jibinge.” ‡

If such petulant and rough treatment fell to the lot of her courtiers in public, we may rest assured, that in private, her domestics, and ladies of honour, experienced not a milder fate. Manual correction, indeed, we are told, was a frequent resource with Her Majesty, and even when chiding for “small neglects,” Fenton tells us, in a letter to Sir John Harrington, dated May, 1597, that it was “in such wise, as to make these fair maids often cry and bewail in piteous sort.” § In short, to adopt the language of Sir Robert Cecil, who had an intimate knowledge both of her public and private character, she “was more than a man, and (in troth) sometyme less than a woman.” **

Elizabeth, indeed, possessed many qualities of the most exalted rank, and her courage, magnanimity, prudence, and political wisdom were such as to redeem the foibles which we have enumerated. They were virtues, of which her successor was totally destitute; for the manners of James may be truly painted by the epithets, frivolity, pusillanimity, extravagance, pedantry, and credulity.

Some of the most striking traits in his character have been drawn with great strength and vivacity in Sir John Harrington's description of an interview with this monarch, in January, 1607:—

* The Court and Character of King James, 12mo. 1650. p. 5, 6.

† *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 175, 176.

§ *Ibid.* p. 225.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 167.

** *Ibid.* p. 345.

"He enquyrede," says he, "much of lernynge, and shewed me his owne in suche sorte, as made me remember my examiner at Cambridge aforetyme. He soughte much to knowe my advances in philosophie, and utterede profounde sentences of Aristotle, and suche lyke wryters, whiche I had never reade, and which some are bolde enoughe to saye, others do not understand: but this I must passe by. The prince did nowe presse my readinge to him parte of a canto in Ariosto; praysede my utterance, and said he had been informede of manie, as to my lernynge, in the tyme of the Queene. He asked me 'what I thoughte pure witte was made of; and whom it did best become? Whether a Kynge shoulde not be the best clerke in his own countrie; and, if this lande did not entertayne goode opinion of his lernynge and good wisdom?' His Majestie did much presse for my opinion touchinge the power of Satane in matter of witchcraft; and askede me, with much gravitie,—'If I did trulie understande, why the devil did worke more with ancient women than others?' I did not refraine from a scurvey jeste, and even saide (notwithstandinge to whom it was said) that—we were taught hereof in scripture, where it is tolde, that the devil walketh in dry places.—His Highnesse tolde me the Queene his mothers deathe was visible in Scotlande before it did really happen, being, as he saide, 'spoken of in secrete by those whose power of sight presentede to them a bloodie heade dancinge in the aire.' He then did remarke much on this gifte, and saide he had soughte out of certaine bookes a sure waie to attaine knowledge of future chances. Hereat, he namede many bookes, which I did not knowe, nor by whom written; but advised me not to consult some authors which woulde leade me to evill consultations—at lengthe he saide: Now, Sir, you have seene my wisdom in some sorte, and I have pried into yours. I praye you, do me justice in your reporte, and in good season, I will not fail to add to your understandinge, in suche pointes as I maye find you lacke amendment."*

This is an extract which lays open the heart of James, and speaks volumes on the subject.

The manners of the reigning monarch imperceptibly give a colouring to those of every class of society, stronger in proportion to its approximation to the source; a remark which is fully exemplified in the females of the reign of Elizabeth, those especially who constituted, or were near, the court, copying, according to their ability, the virtues, accomplishments, and foibles of the Queen. They were learned, skilled in needle-work, and wrote a beautiful hand, in emulation of the Queen's, which, in the earlier period of her life, was peculiarly elegant; but they were, also, vain, capricious, and in their habits and language often masculine and coarse.

It was customary for ladies of the first rank to give manual correction to their servants of both sexes; a practice of which Shakspeare has given us an instance in his *Twelfth-Night*, where Maria, alluding to Malvolio's whimsical appearance, says, "I know my lady will strike him." (Act iii. sc. 2.) Nor were often their daily occupations, or their language, when provoked, in the least degree more feminine; we are told that Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, "was a builder, a buyer and seller of estates, a money lender, a farmer, and a merchant of lead, coals and timber;" and her daughter Mary, who married Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury, sent the following message to Sir Thomas Stanhope, with whom she had quarrelled, by one George Williamson, which message was

"Delivered by the said Williamson, February 15, 1592, in the presence of certain persons whose names were subscribed—'My Lady hath commanded me to say thus much to you. That though you be more wretched, vile, and miserable, than any creature living; and for your wickedness, become more ugly in shape than the vilest toad in the world; and one to whom none of reputation would vouchsafe to send any message; yet she hath thought good to send thus much to you—that she be contented you should live (and doth nowaies wish your death), but to this end: that all the plagues and miseries that may befall any man may light upon such a caitiff as you are; and that you should live to have all your friends forsake you; and, without your great repentance, which she looketh not for because your hath been so bad, you will be damned perpetually in hell fire.' With many other opprobrious and hatefull words, which could not be remembered, because the bearer would deliver it but once, as he said he was commanded; but said if he had failed in any thing, it was in speaking it more mildly, and not in terms of such disdain as he was commanded."†

* *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 367—370.

† *Lodge's Illustrations of British History*, vol. i. Introduction, p. xviii. xix. from a MS. in the possession of the Rev. Sir Richard Kaye, Dean of Lincoln.

Of the male population of this period, the manners seem to have been compounded from the characters of the two sovereigns. Like Elizabeth, they were brave, magnanimous, and prudent; and sometimes, like James, credulous, curious, and dissipated. On the virtues, happily from their notoriety, there is little occasion to comment; foreigners, as well as natives, bearing testimony to their existence: thus Hentzner tells us,—“The English are serious, like the Germans;—they are powerful in the field, successful against their enemies, impatient of any thing like slavery.”* But of the foibles and vices, as more evanescent and mutable, it may be interesting to state a few particulars.

Of the credulity and superstition which abounded during this era, and which had been fostered by the weakness of James, a sufficient detail has already been given in a former part of this work; and we shall here merely add, that Alchemy was one of the foolish pursuits of the day. Scot, who has devoted the fourteenth book of his treatise on the “Discoverie of Witchcraft,” to this subject, tells us that the admirable description given by Chaucer of this folly, in his *Channonnes Yemannes* prologue and tale, still strictly applied to its cultivators in 1584, who continued to

————— “looke ill-favouredlie,
And were alwaies tired beggarlie,
So as by smelling and thredbare araie,
These folke are knowne and discerned alwaie.”†

An insatiable curiosity for seeing strange sights, and hearing strange adventures, together with an eager desire for visiting foreign countries, prevailed in an extraordinary degree during the age of Shakspeare, who has, in several parts of his works, satirized these propensities with much humour. In the *Tempest*, for instance, he has held up to scorn the first of these foibles in an admirable strain of sarcasm:—“A strange fish! Were I in England now (as once I was), and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver; there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian;” (act ii. sc. 2) a passage which Mr. Douce has very appositely illustrated by a quotation from *Batman*. “Of late years,” says the Gothic Pliny, “there hath been brought into England, the cases or skinnies of such crocodiles to be seene, and much money given for the sight thereof; the policy of strangers laugh at our folly, either that we are too wealthy, or else that we know not how to bestow our money.”‡

Of the influence arising from the relation of strange adventures, we have a striking proof in the character of *Othello*, who won the affections of his mistress by the detail of his “hair-breadth scapes:”—

“Wherein of antres vast, and desarts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven
It was ‘his’ hint to speak.” Act i. sc. 3.

It appears, indeed, that the conversation of this period very frequently turned upon the wonderful discoveries of travellers, whose voyages to, and travels in the New World then occupied much of the public attention. Exaggeration, from a love of importance, too often accompanied these narratives, a license which our poet has happily ridiculed in the following lines:—

————— “When we were boys,
Who would believe that there were mountaineers
Dew-lapp’d like bulls, whose throats had hanging at them
Wallets of flesh? or that there were such men,

* Hentzner’s *Travels*, p. 63, 64.

† *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 4to. p. 355, 356.—Scot has taken great liberties with the text of Chaucer, both in modernising the language, and in tacking together widely separated lines and couplets.

‡ *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. i. p. 14.—*Batman upon Bartholome*, fol. 359. b.

Whose heads stood in their breasts? which now we find
Each putter-out on five for one, will bring us
Good warrant of."

Tempest. Act iii. sc. 3.

The close of this passage alludes to a practice then common among the numerous travellers of those times, of putting out their money, especially when about to undertake a long and hazardous journey, for the purpose of receiving exorbitant interest on their return: a custom which, Moryson informs us, originated among the nobility, but before 1617 had become frequent even with men of base condition. Thus we find Ben Jonson, in 1599, representing Puntarvolo, in "Every Man out of his Humour," disclosing such a scheme:—"I do intend," says he, "this year of jubilee coming on, to travel: and, because I will not altogether go upon expense, I am determined to put forth some five thousand pound, to be paid me *five for one*, upon the return of myself, my wife, and my dog from the Turk's court in Constantinople. If all or either of us miscarry in the journey, 'tis gone: if we be successful, why there will be five and twenty thousand pound to entertain time withal." Act ii. sc. 3.

To such a height had this passion for travelling attained, that those who were not able to accomplish a distant expedition, crossed over to France or Italy, and gave themselves as many airs on their return, as if they had been to the antipodes; a species of affectation which Shakspeare acutely satirizes in the following terms:—"Farewell, monsieur traveller; look, you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola." *

An equally severe castigation has been bestowed on these superficial rambles, in "Observations and Discourses," published by Edward Blount, in 1620, who informs us, that their discourse made them every where ridiculous. "The name of English gelding," he adds, "frights them; and thence they take occasion to fall into the commendation of a mule, or an ass. A pasty of venison makes them sweat, and then swear that the only delicacies be mushrooms, or caveare, or snails. A toast in beer or ale drives them into madness; and so to declaim against the absurd and ignorant customs of their own country, and thereupon digress into the commendation of drinking their wine refreshed with ice or snow."

The pernicious habit of gaming had become almost universal in the days of Elizabeth, and, if we may credit George Whetstone, had reached a prodigious degree of excess. Speaking of the licentiousness of the stage previous to the appearance of Shakspeare, he adds,

"But there are in the bowels of this famous citie, farre more daungerous plays, and little reprehended: that wicked playes of the dice, first invented by the devill (as Cornelius Agrippa wryteth), and frequented by unhappy men: the detestable roote, upon which a thousand villanies grow.

"The nurses of thease (worse than heathenysh) hellish exercises are places called ordinary tables: of which there are in London, more in nomber to honour the devyll, than churches to serve the living God.

"I constantly determine to crosse the streets, where these vile houses (ordinaries) are planted, to blesse me from the inticements of them, which in very deed are many, and the more dangerous in that they please with a vain hope of gain. Insomuch on a time, I heard a distemperate dicer solemnly sweare that he faithfully beleevd, that dice were first made of the bones of a witch, and cards of her skin, in which there hath ever sithence remained an enchantment y^t whosoever once taketh delight in either, he shall never have power utterly to leave them, for, quoth he, I a hundred times vowed to leave both, yet have not the grace to forsake either." †

No opportunity for the practice of this ruinous habit seems to have been omitted, and we find the modern mode of gambling, by taking the odds, to have been fully

* As You Like It, act iv. sc. 1.

† "The Enemie to Vnthyrtinesse: publishing by Lawes, documents and disciplines, &c. By George Whetstons, Gent. Printed at London by Richard Jones, 1586." 4to. p. 24, 32.—Vide British Bibliographer, vol. iii. p. 601—604.

established towards the latter end of the sixteenth century; for Gilbert Talbot, writing to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, on May the 15th, 1579, after informing His Lordship, that the matter of the Queen's marriage with Monsieur "is growne very colde," subjoins, "and yet I know a man may take a thousande pounds, in this towne, to be bounde to pay doble so muche when Mons. cumethe into Inglande, and treble so muche when he marryethe the Q. Ma^{tie}., and if he nether doe the one nor the other, to gayne the thousande poundes cleare."

Duelling, at this period, from its frequency, had given rise to a complicated system of rules for its regulation, and to fixed schools for its practice and improvement. The "Noble Science of Defence," as it was called, included three degrees, a Master's, a Provost's, and a Scholar's, and for each of these a regular prize was played. In order, also, to obviate disputes, "four Ancient Masters of Defence" were constituted, who resided "in the city of London," and to whom not only difficult points of honour were referred, but tribute was likewise paid by all inferior professors of the science.

Nor were books wanting to explain, and to adjust, the causes and the modes of quarrelling. Of these the two most celebrated were written by Saviolo and Caranza, authors who are repeatedly mentioned by Shakspeare, Jonson, and Fletcher. The absurd minuteness of Saviolo's treatise, entitled, "Of Honour and honourable Quarrels," 4to, 1595, has been ridiculed with exquisite humour in *As You Like It*, where Touchstone says

"O sir, we quarrel in print, by the book;—we met, and found the quarrel was upon the seventh cause.

Jaq. How did you find the quarrel on the seventh cause?

Touch. Upon a lie seven times removed;—as thus: I did dislike the cut of a certain courtier's beard; he sent me word, if I said his beard was not cut well, he was in the mind it was: This is called the *Retort courteous*. If I sent him word again, it was not well cut, he would send me word, he cut it to please himself: This is called the *Quip modest*. If again, it was not well cut, he disabled my judgment: This is call'd the *Reply churlish*. If again, it was not well cut, he would answer, I spake not true: This is call'd the *Reproof valiant*. If again, it was not well cut, he would say, I lie: This is call'd the *Countercheck quarrelsome*: and so to the *Lie circumstantial*, and the *Lie direct*.—All these you may avoid, but the lie direct; and you may avoid that too, with an *If*. I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an *If*, as, *If you said so, then I said so*; and they shook hands, and swore brothers. Your *If* is the only peace-maker; much virtue in *If*."—Act v. sc. 4.

Nor is this much exaggerated; for Saviolo has a chapter on the Diversity of Lies, and enumerates the "Lie certain," the "conditional Lie," the "Lie in general," the "Lie in particular," the "foolish Lie," and the "returning back of the Lie."

A taste for gossiping, as well amongst the *male* as female sex, was more than usually prevalent at this epoch. An anonymous writer of 1620, speaking of male gossips, describes their trifling and vexatiously intrusive manners, in a way which leads us to conclude, that the evil was severely felt, and of great magnitude:

"It is a wonder," says he, "to see what multitudes there be of all sorts that make this their only business, and in a manner spend their whole time in compliment; as if they were born to no other end, bred to no other purpose, had nothing else to do, than to be a kind of living walking ghosts, to haunt and persecute others with unnecessary observation.—

"If these giddy goers be forced to give a reason for their wheeling up and down the streets, their answer is, they know not else how to pass their time. And how tedious it is, for a man that accounts his hours, to be subject to these vacancies, and apply himself to lose a day with such time-passers; who neither come for business, nor out of true friendship, but only to spend the day; as if one had nothing else to do, but to supply their idle time!—

"After they have asked you how you do, and told some old or fabulous news, laughed twice or thrice in your face, and censured those they know you love not (when, peradventure, the next place they go to, is to them—where they will be as courteous to you); spoke a few words of fashions and alterations;—made legs and postures of the last editlon; with three or four diminutive oaths and protestations of their service and observance; they then retire."

The diminutive oaths, mentioned at the close of this quotation, were, unfortu-

nately, considered as ornaments of conversation, and adopted by both sexes, in order to give spirit and vivacity to their language; a shocking practice, which seems to have been rendered fashionable by the very reprehensible habit of the Queen, whose oaths were neither diminutive nor rare; for it is said, that she never spared an oath in public speech or private conversation when she thought it added energy to either. After this example in the highest classes, we need not be surprised when Stubbes tells us, speaking of the great body of the people, that, "if they speake but three or four words, yet they must be interlaced with a bloudie oath or two."

These abominable expletives appear to have formed no small share of the language of compliment, a species of simulation which was carried to an extraordinary height in the days of our poet: thus Marston, describing the finished gallant, says, —

————— "Marke nothing but his clothes,
His new stamp't *complement*; his *cannon oathes*;
Marke those."*

Decker, apostrophising the courtiers of his day, and playing upon a term of Guido's musical scale, exclaims, — "You courtiers, that do nothing but sing the gamut A-Re of complimentary courtesy;" † and Shakspeare, painting this

————— "sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth,
represents the Bastard in his King John, thus addressing a travelled fop:—

————— "My dear sir,
(Thus leaning on mine elbow, I begin),
I shall beseech you—That is question now;
And then comes answer like an A B C book;—
O sir, says answer, *at your best command*;
At your employment; *at your service*, sir:
No, sir, says question, *I, sweet sir, at yours*:
And so, ere answer knows what question would,
(Saving in dialogue of *compliment*;
And talking of the Alps, and Appennines,
The Pyrenean, and the river Po),
It draws toward supper."

Act i. sc. 1.

"What a deal of synamon and ginger is sacrificed to dissimulation," observes Sir William Cornwallis in 1601. "O, how blessed do I take mine eyes for presenting me with this sight! O Signior, the star that governs my life is contentment, give me leave to interre myself in your arms!—Not so, sir, it is too unworthy an inclosure to contain such preciousness," &c. This, and a cup of drink, makes the time as fit for a departure as can be."‡

A peculiar species of compliment existed among the scientific and literary characters of our author's times, in permitting those who looked up to them with reverence and esteem, to address them by the endearing appellation of *Father*; adopting them, in fact, as their literary offspring, and designating them, in their works, by the title of sons. In conformity with this custom, Ben Jonson adopted not less than twelve or fourteen persons for his sons, among whom were, Cart-right, Randolph, Brome, etc.; and the practice continued to be observed until the end of the seventeenth century; for in 1676, Charles Cotton dedicated his *Complete Angler* to his "most worthy father and friend, Mr. Izaak Walton, the elder;" and says in the body of his work, "he gives me leave to call him Father, and I hope is not yet ashamed of his Adopted Son."

This complimentary paternity Shakspeare has introduced in his *Troilus and Cressida*, where Ajax, addressing Nestor, says, — "Shall I call you father?" to which the venerable Grecian replies, "Ay, my good son."

To this sketch of manners, we shall add a brief account of some customs, which

* Scourge of Villanie, 1599. book ii. sat. 7.

† Gull's Horn-book, p. 15.

‡ Essayes by Sir William Cornwallyes, Essay 28.

more peculiarly belong to the province of Police, commencing with the inaugural ceremonies attendant on the Lord Mayor's entrance on the duties of his office. The pageantry and magnificence which once accompanied this periodical assumption of power, may be estimated from the following description, taken from a manuscript written in 1575:—

“ The day of St. Simon and Jude he (the Mayor) entreth into his estate and offyce: and the next daie following he goeth by water to Westmynster, in most tryumphlyke manner. His barge beinge garnished with the armes of the citie: and nere the sayd barge goeth a shypbote of the Queenes Ma^{tie}, beinge trymed upp, and rigged lyke a shippe of warre, with dyvers peces of ordnance, standards, penons, and targetts of the proper armes of the sayd Mayor, the armes of the Citie, of his company; and of the maurchaunts adventurers, or of the staple, or of the company of the newe trades; next before hym goeth the barge of the lyvery of his owne company, decked with their owne proper armes, then the bachelers barge, and so all the companies in London, in order, every one havinge their owne proper barge garnished with the armes of their company. And so passinge alonge the Thamise, landeth at Westmynster, where he taketh his othe in Thexcheker, beffore the judge there (which is one of the chiefe judges of England), which done, he returneth by water as afforsayd, and landeth at Powles wharfe, where he and the rest of the Aldermen take their horses, and in great pompe passe through the greate streete of the citie, called Cheapside. And fyrste of all cometh ij great estandarts, one having the armes of the citie, and the other the armes of the Mayor's company: next them ij drommes and a flute, then an ensign of the citie, and then about lxx or lxxx poore men marchinge ij and two togeather in blewe gownes, with redd sleeves and capps, every one bearinge a pyke and a target, wheron is paynted the armes of all them that have byn Mayor of the same company that this newe mayor is of. Then ij banners, one of the kynges armes, the other of the Mayor's owne proper armes. Then a sett of hautboits playinge, and after them certayne wyfflers, in velvett cotes, and chaynes of golde, with white staves in their handes, then the pageant of tryumphe rychly decked, whereuppon by certayne fygures and wrytinges, some matter touchinge justice, and the office of a maiestrate is represented. Then xvj trumpeters, viij and viij in a company, havinge banners of the Mayor's company. Then certayne wyfflers in velvet cotes and chaynes, with white staves as aforesayde. Then the bachelers ij and two togeather, in longe gownen, with crymson hoodes on their shoulders of sattyn; which bachelers are chosen every yeare of the same company that the Mayor is of (but not of the lyvery), and serve as gentlemen on that and other festivall daies, to wayte on the Mayor, beinge in nomber accordinge to the quantetie of the company, sometimes sixty or one hundred. After them xij trompeters more, with banners of the Mayor's company, then the dromme and flute of the citie, and an ensigne of the Mayor's company, and after, the waytes of the citie in blewe gownes, redd sleeves and cappes, every one havinge his silver coller about his neck. Then they of the liverie in their longe gownes, every one havinge his hood on his lefte shoulder, halfe black and halfe redd, the nomber of them is accordinge to the greatnes of the companye whereof they are. After them followe Sheriffes officers, and then the Mayor's officers, with other officers of the citie, as the comon sargent, and the chamberlayne; next before the Mayor goeth the sword-bearer, having on his headd the cappe of honor, and the sworde of the citie in his right hande, in a riche skabarde, sett with pearle, and on his left hand goeth the comon cryer of the citie, with his great mace on his shoulder, all gilt. The Mayor hathe on a long gowne of skarlet, and on his lefte shoulder, a hood of black velvet, and a riche coller of gold of SS. about his necke, and with him rydeth the olde Mayor also, in his skarlet gowne, hood of velvet, and a chayne of golde about his neck. Then all the Aldermen ij and ij together (amongst whom is the Recorder), all in skarlet gownes; and those that have byn Mayors, have chaynes of gold, the other have black velvett tippetts. The ij Shereffes come last of all, in their black skarlet gownes and chaynes of golde.

“ In this order they passe alonge through the citie, to the Guyldhall, where they dyne that daie, to the number of 1000 persons, all at the charge of the Mayor and the ij shereffes. This feast costeth 400*l.*, whereof the Mayor payeth 200*l.*, and eche of the Shereffes 100*l.* Immediately after dyner, they go to the church of St. Paule, every one of the aforesaid poore men, bearrynge staffe torches and targetts, whiche torches are lighted when it is late, before they come from evenynge prayer.”*

Had the police of the city been as strictly regulated, as were the ceremonies

* A breffe description of the Royall Citie of London, capitall citie of this realme of England. (City arms.) Wrytten by me William Smythe citezen and haberdasher of London, 1575.” MS. “ This compilation,” says Mr. Haslewood, “ forms a quarto volume of moderate thickness, and was intended for publication.” —*British Bibliographer*, vol. i. p. 539—542.

attending the inauguration of its chief magistrate, the inhabitants of London, in Queen Elizabeth's days, would have had little cause of complaint, with regard to personal protection; but, though the Statutes of the Streets were numerous and rigid, and sometimes ridiculously minute, for No. 22 enacts, that "no man shall blowe any horne in the night, within this citie, or whistle after the houre of nyne of the clock in the night, under paine of imprisonment," yet they were so ill executed, that, even in the day-time, disturbances of the most atrocious kind were deemed matters of common occurrence. Thus Gilbert Talbot and his wife, writing to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, consider the following acts of violence as trifling matters:

"On Thursday laste (Feb. 13th, 1587), as my Lorde Rytche was rydyng in the streates, there was one Wyndam that stode in a dore, and shotte a dagge at him, thynkyng to have slayne him; but Cod provyded so for my L. Rytche, that this Wyndam apoyntyng his servante y^t mor-nyng to charge his dagge wth 11 bulletts, the fellow, doubtinge he mente to doe sum myschefe wth it, charged it only wth powder and paper, and no bullett; and so this L's lyfe was thereby saved, for otherwyse he had beene slayne. Wyndam was presently taken by my L. Rytche's men, and, beyng broughte before the Counsell, confessed his intende, but the cause of his quarrell I knowe not; but he is comytted to the Towre. The same daye, also, as Sr John Conway was goyng in the streetes, Mr Lodovyke Grevell came sodenly uppon him, and stroke him on the hedd wth a sworde, and but for one of Sr John Conway's men, who warded the blow, he had cutt of his legges; yet did he hurte him sumwhat on bothe his shynns: The Councell sente for Lodovyko Grevell, and have comytted him to the Marchalleye. I am forced to trouble yo^r Honors wth theses tryflyng matters, for I know no greater." *

Yet a sufficient number of watchmen, constables, and justices of the peace was not wanting. Of these, the first were armed with halberds, which, in Shakspeare's time, were called bills, and they usually carried a lanthorn in one hand, and sometimes a bell in the other, resting the halberd on the shoulder.† Notwithstanding these official characters, however, the peace of the city was frequently more effectually preserved by the interference of the apprentices, than by that of the appointed guardians of public order; for it appears, from Shakspeare's dramas, that the cry of Clubs! was a signal for the apprentices to arm themselves with these weapons, and quell the disturbance. Thus in King Henry the Eighth (act v. sc. 3), the Porter's man says:—"I hit that woman who cried out, clubs! when I might see from far some forty truncheoneers draw to her succour, which were the hope of the Strand;" and in Henry the Sixth, Part the First, even the Mayor of London is represented, on occasion of a quarrel between the partizans of the Duke of Gloucester and the Cardinal of Winchester, as threatening to call in similar assistance:—

"I'll call for *clubs*, if you will not away."—Act i. sc. 3.

We cannot wonder that the inferior officers of the Police should be slack in the performance of their duty, when we recollect, that the Justices of the Peace, in these days, especially those resident in the metropolis, were so open to bribery, that many of them obtained the appellation of Basket Justices; nor did a member of the House of Commons hesitate, during the reign of Elizabeth, to describe a justice of the peace as "an animal who for half a dozen of chickens would readily dispense with a dozen penal laws."‡

Many customs of a miscellaneous nature might with ease be extracted from the dramas of our poet; but to give them any relative bearing or concatenation would be nearly impossible, and a totally insulated detail of minute circumstances would prove tedious to the most persevering reader. Enough, we trust, has been collected to throw no feeble light on the general manners and modes of living, of

* Lodge Illustrations, vol. ii. p. 206.

† The costume of the Watchman is thus represented in the title-page to Decker's "O per se O," &c. 4to. 1612.

‡ D'Ewes's Journals of Parliament, in Queen Elizabeth's Reign, p. 661, 664.

the period under consideration, especially if it be recollected that the full picture is to be formed from a combination of this with the similar chapter, in a former part of the work, on the costume of rural life.

CHAPTER VII.

On the Diversions of the Metropolis, and the Court—The Stage ; its Usages and Economy.

OF the diversions of the metropolis and court, some were peculiar, and some were shared in common with the country. “The country hath his recreations,” observes Burton, “the city his several Gymnicks and exercises, feasts and merry meetings.”—“What so pleasant as to see some Pageant or sight go by, as at Coronations, Weddings, and such like solemnities, to see an Embassadour or a Prince met, received, entertained, with Maskes, Shews, Fireworks, etc. :^{*} and an old dramatic poet, of 1590, gives us a still more copious list of town amusements:—

“ — Let nothing that’s magnificent,
Or that may tend to London’s graceful state,
Be unperform’d, as shewes and solemne feastes,
Watches in armour, triumphes cresset, lights,
Bonfires, belles, and peales of ordinaunce
And pleasure. See that plaies be published,
Mai-games and maskes, with mirth and minstrelsie,
Pageants and school-feastes, beares and puppet-plaies.

“Every palace,” continues Burton, “every city almost, hath his peculiar walks, cloysters, terraces, groves, theatres, pageants, games, and several recreations ;”[†] and we purpose, in this chapter, giving some account of the leading articles thus enumerated, but more particularly of the stage, as being peculiarly connected with the design and texture of our work.

As the principal object, therefore, of the present discussion will be the amusements usually appropriated to the capital ; those which it has in common with the country shall be first enumerated, though in a more superficial way.

Of these, card-playing seems to have been as universal in the days of Elizabeth, as in modern times, and carried on, too, with the same ruinous consequences to property and morals ; for though Stowe tells us, when commemorating the customs of London, that “from All-Hallows eve to the day following Candlemas-day, there was, among other sports, playing at cards for counters, nails, and points, in every house, more for pastime than for gain,” yet we learn from contemporary satirists, from Gosson, Stubbes, and Northbrooke,[§] that all ranks, and especially the upper classes, were incurably addicted to gaming in the pursuit of this amusement, which they considered equally as seductive and pernicious as dice.

The games at cards peculiar to this period, and now obsolete, are, 1. *Primero*, supposed to be the most ancient game of cards in England. It was very fashionable in the age of Shakspeare, who represents Henry the Eighth playing “at primero with the duke of Suffolk ;” (Act. v. sc. 1.) and Falstaff exclaiming in

^{*} Anatomie of Melancholy, fol. 8th edit. p. 171. col. i.

[†] “The Pleasant and Stately Morall of the Three Lordes and Three Ladies of London,” &c. London, 1590. Vide Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes, Introduct., p. xxviii.; and Beloe’s Anecdotes of Literature, vol. i. p. 350, 351.

[‡] Anatomie of Melancholy, p. 172. col. i.

[§] “Schoole of Abuse,” “Anatomie of Abuses,” and “Treatise againt Diceing, Card-playing” &c.

the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "I never prospered since I foreswore myself at primero." Act iv. sc. 5.

The mode of playing this curious game is thus described by Mr. Strutt, from Mr. Barrington's papers upon card-playing, in the eighth volume of the *Archæologia*:—

"Each player had four cards dealt to him one by one, the seven was the highest card in point of number that he could avail himself of, which counted for twenty-one, the six counted for sixteen, the five for fifteen, and the ace for the same, but the two, the three, and the four, for their respective points only. The knave of hearts was commonly fixed upon for the quinola, which the player might make what card or suit he thought proper; if the cards were of different suits, the highest number won the primero, if they were all of one colour he that held them won the flush." *

2. Trump, nearly coeval in point of antiquity with primero, and introduced in "*Gammer Gurton's Needle*," a comedy, first acted in 1561, where Dame Chat, addressing Diccon, says,—

"We be fast set at trump, man, hard by the fyre;"

and we learn from Decker that, in 1612, it was much in vogue:—

"To speake," he remarks, "of all the sleights used by card-players in all sorts of games would but weary you that are to read, and bee but a thanklesse and unpleasing labour for me to set them down. Omitting, therefore, the deceipts practised (even in the sayrest and most civill companies) at Primero, Saint Maw, *Trump*, and such like games, I will, &c." †

3. Gleek. This game is alluded to twice by Shakspeare; ‡ and from a passage in Cook's "*Green's Tu Quoque*," appears to have been held in much esteem:—

Scat. Come, gentlemen, what is your game?

Staines. Why, *gleek*; *that's your only game*;"

it is then proposed to play either at twelve-penny gleek, or crown gleek. §

To these may be added, Gresco, Mount Saint, New Cut, Knave out of Doors, and Ruff, all of which are mentioned in old plays, and were favourites among our ancestors. **

Tables and Dice, enumerated by Burton after cards, include some games unknown to the present day; such as tray-trip, mum-chance, philosopher's game, novum, etc.; the first is noticed by Shakspeare in *Twelfth Night*, and appears, from a note by Mr. Tyrwhitt, to have been a species of draughts; the second was also a game at tables, and is coupled by Ben Jonson in the "*Alchemist*" with tray-trip; the third is mentioned by Burton, and is described by Mr. Strutt from a manuscript in the British Museum.—"It is called," says the author, "'a number fight,' because in it men fight and strive together by the art of counting or numbering how one may take his adversary's king and erect a triumph upon the deficiency of his calculations;" and the fourth is introduced by Shakspeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act v. sc. 2); "it was properly called Novum quinque," remarks Mr. Douce, "from the two principal throws of the dice, nine and five;—was called in French Quinque-nove, and is said to have been invented in Flanders."

The immoralities to which dice have given birth, we are authorised in considering, from the proverbial phraseology of Shakspeare, to have been as numerous in

* Sports and Pastimes, 4to. 1810, p. 291, 292.

† Belman of London, sig. F 2.

‡ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 1. *Romeo and Juliet*, act iv. sc. 5.

§ In the *Compleat Gamester*, 2nd edit. 1676, p. 90, may be found the mode of playing this game.

** The first of these games is mentioned in "*Eastward Hoe*," printed in 1605, and written by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston; the second in the "*Dumb Knight*," the production of Lewis Machin, 1608; the third in "*A Woman killed with Kindness*," written by Thomas Heywood, 1617, where are also noticed Lodam, Noddy, Post and Pair, a species of Brag, Knave out of Doors, and Ruff, this last being something like Whist, and played in four different ways, under the names of English Ruff, French Ruff, Double Ruff, and Wide Ruff.—Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii. p. 444, 445.

his time as at present. The expressions “false as dice,”* and “false as dicers’ oaths,” † will be illustrated by the following anecdote, taken from an anonymous MS. of the reign of James the First:—

“Sir William Herbert, playing at dice with another gentleman, there rose some questions about a cast. Sir William’s antagonist declared it was a four and a five; he as positively insisted that it was a five and a six; the other then swore with a bitter imprecation, that it was as he had said; Sir William then replied, ‘Thou art a perjured knave; for give me a sixpence, and if there be a four upon the dice, I will return you a thousand pounds;’ at which the other was presently bashed, for indeed the dice were false, and of a high cut, without a four.” ‡

Dancing was an almost daily amusement in the court of Elizabeth; the Queen was peculiarly fond of this exercise, as had been her father Henry the Eighth, and the taste for it became so general, during her reign, that a great part of the leisure of almost every class of society was spent, and especially on days of festivity, in dancing.

To dance elegantly was one of the strongest recommendations to the favour of Her Majesty; and her courtiers, therefore, strove to rival each other in this pleasing accomplishment; nor were their efforts, in many instances, unrewarded. Sir Christopher Hatton, we are told, owed his promotion, in a great measure, to his skill in dancing; and in accordance with this anecdote, Gray opens his “Long Story” with an admirable description of his merit in this department, which, as containing a most just and excellent picture, both of the architecture and manners of “the days of good Queen Bess,” as well as of the dress and agility of the knight, we with pleasure transcribe. Stoke-Pogeis, the scene of the narrative, was formerly in the possession of the Hattons:—

“In Britain’s isle, no matter where,
An ancient pile of building stands;
The Huntingdons and Hattons there
Employ’d the pow’r of Fairy hands

To raise the cieling’s fretted height,
Each pannel in achievements clothing,
Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.

Full oft within the spacious walls,
When he had fifty winters o’er him,
My grave Lord-Keeper led the *brawls*;
The seal and maces danc’d before him.

His bushy beard and shoe-strings green,
His high-crown’d hat and sattin doublet,
Mov’d the stout heart of England’s Queen,
Tho’ Pope and Spaniard could not trouble it.”

The Brawl, a species of dance, here alluded to, is derived from the French word *braule*, “indicating,” observes Mr. Douce, “a shaking or swinging motion.—It was performed by several persons uniting hands in a circle, and giving each other continual shakes, the steps changing with the tune. It usually consisted of three pas and a pied-joint, to the time of four strokes of the bow; which, being repeated, was termed a double brawl. With this dance, balls were usually opened.” §

Shakspeare seems to have entertained as high an idea of the efficacy of a French brawl, as probably did Sir Christopher Hatton, when he exhibited before Queen Elizabeth; for he makes Moth in Love’s Labour’s Lost ask Armado,—“Master, will you win your love with a French brawl?” and he then exclaims, “These betray nice wenches.” (Act iii. sc. 1.) That several dances were included under the term *brawls*, appears from a passage in Shelton’s *Don Quixote*:—“After this there came in another artificial dance, of those called *Brawles*;” and Mr. Douce informs us, that amidst a great variety of *brawls*, noticed in Thoinot Arbeau’s treatise on dancing, entitled “*Orchesographie*,” occurs a Scottish brawl; and he adds that this dance continued in fashion to the close of the seventeenth century.**

Another dance of much celebrity at this period, was the Pavin or Pavan, which, from the solemnity of its measure, seems to have been held in utter aversion by

* Winter’s Tale, act i. sc. 2.

† Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes, p. 272.

** Illustrations, vol. i. p. 219, 220.

‡ Hamlet, act iii. sc. 4.

§ Illustrations, vol. i. p. 217.

Sir Toby Belch, who, in reference to his intoxicated surgeon, exclaims,—“Then he’s a rogue. After a passy-measure, or a pavin, I hate a drunken rogue.” This is the text of Mr. Tyrwhitt; but the old copy reads,—“Then he’s a rogue, and a passy measure’s pavyn,” which is probably correct; for the pavan was rendered still more grave by the introduction of the passamezzo air, which obliged the dancers, after making several steps round the room, to cross it in the middle in a slow step or cinque pace. This alteration of time occasioned the term passamezzo to be prefixed to the name of several dances; thus we read of the passamezzo galliard, as well as the passamezzo pavan; and Sir Toby, by applying the latter appellation to his surgeon, meant to call him, not only a rogue, but a solemn coxcomb.

“The pavan, from *pavo*, a peacock,” observes Sir J. Hawkins, “is a grave and majestick dance. The method of dancing it was anciently by gentlemen dressed with a cap and sword, by those of the long robe in their gowns, by princes in their mantles, and by ladies in gowns with long trains, the motion whereof in the dance resembled that of a peacock’s tail. This dance is supposed to have been invented by the Spaniards, and its figure is given with the characters for the step, in the *Orchesographia* of Thoinot Arbeau.—Of the passamezzo little is to be said, except that it was a favourite air in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Ligon, in his *History of Barbadoes*, mentions a passamezzo galliard, which, in the year 1647, a Padre in that island played to him on the lute; the very same, he says, with an air of that kind which in Shakspeare’s play of *Henry the Fourth* was originally played to Sir John Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet, by Sneak, the musician, there named.”

Of equal gravity with the “doleful pavin,” as Sir W. D’Avenant calls it, was “The Measure,” to tread which was the relaxation of the most dignified characters in the state, and formed a part of the revelry of the inns of court, where the gravest lawyers were often found treading the measures. Shakspeare puns upon the name of this dance, and contrasts it with the Scotch jig, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, where he introduces Beatrice telling her cousin Hero,—

“The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not woo’d in good time: if the prince be too important, tell him, there is measure in every thing, and so dance out the answer. For hear me, Hero: Wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster, till he sink into his grave.” Act ii. sc. 1.

A more brisk and lively step accompanied the Canary dance, which was, likewise, very fashionable:—"I have seen a medicine," says Lafeu in *All's Well that Ends Well*, alluding to the influence of female charms,—

" That's able to breathe life into a stone ;
Quicken a rock, and *make you dance canary,*
With spritely fire and motion ; Act ii. sc. I.

and Moth advises Armado, when dancing the brawl, to "Canary it" with his feet.

The mode of performing this dance, is thus given by Mr. Douce, from the treatise of Thoinot Arbeau:—

“A lady is taken out by a gentleman, and after dancing together to the cadences of the proper air, he leaps her to the end of the hall; this done he retreats back to the original spot, always looking at the lady. Then he makes up to her again, with certain steps, and retreats as before. His partner performs the same ceremony, which is several times repeated by both parties, with various strange fantastic steps, very much in the savage style.” Vol. i. p. 221.

Beside the brawl, the pavan, the measure, and the canary, several other dances were in vogue, under the general titles of corantoes, lavoltos, jigs, galliards, and fancies, but the four which we have selected for more peculiar notice, appear to have been the most celebrated.

It is a melancholy proof of the imperfect state of civilisation during the reign

of Elizabeth, that the barbarous sport of Bear and Bull-baiting should have been as favourite a diversion of the court, nobility, and gentry, as of the lowest class of society. Indeed it would appear, from an order issued by the privy council, in July, 1591, that the populace had earlier than their superiors become tired of this cruel spectacle, and had given a marked preference to the amusements of the stage; for it is enacted in the above order, that there should be no plays publicly exhibited on Thursdays; because on Thursdays, bear-baiting and such like pastimes had been usually practised; and four days afterwards an injunction to the same effect was sent to the Lord Mayor, in which, after justly reprobating the performance of plays on the Sabbath, it is added, that on "all other days of the week in divers place the players do use to recite their plays to the great hurt and destruction of the game of bear-baiting, and like pastimes, which are maintained for her Majesty's pleasure." *

History informs us that Elizabeth's pleasure was thus gratified at an early period of her life, and continued to be so to the close of her reign. When confined at Hatfield house, she, and her sister, Queen Mary, were recreated with a grand exhibition of bear-baiting, "with which their highnesses were right well content." † Soon after she had ascended the throne, she entertained the French ambassadors with bear and bull-baiting, and stood a spectatress of the amusement until six in the evening; a similar exhibition took place the next day at Paris-Garden, for the same party; and even twenty-seven years posterior, Her Majesty could not devise a more welcome gratification for the Danish ambassador, than the display of such a spectacle at Greenwich.

So decided a partiality for this savage pastime would, of course, induce her courtiers to take care that their mistress should not be disappointed in this respect, and more especially when she honoured them with one of her periodical visits. Accordingly Laneham tells us, that when she was at Kenilworth Castle, in 1575, not less than thirteen bears were provided for her diversion, and that these were baited with a large species of ban-dogs.

An example thus set by royalty itself, soon spread through every rank, and bear and bull-baiting became one of the most general amusements in England. Shakspeare has alluded to it in more than twenty places, and it has equally attracted the notice of the foreign and domestic historian. Hentzner, whose Itinerary was printed in Latin, A.D. 1598, was a spectator at one of these exhibitions, which he describes in the following manner: speaking of the theatre, he says,

"There is still another place, built in the form of a theatre, which serves for the baiting of bulls and bears; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs, but not without great risque to the dogs, from the horns of the one, and the teeth of the other; and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot; fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired." P. 29, 30. He then adds an account of a still more inhuman pastime:—"To this entertainment, there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them." Stowe, in the edition of his Survey printed in 1618, remarks, that "as for the bayting of Bulles and Beares, they are till this day much frequented, namely, in Beare-gardens on the Bankside, wherein be prepared Scaffolds for beholders to stand upon." P. 147.

The admission to these gardens was upon easy terms, for we are told that the spectators paid "one pennie at the gate, another at the entrie of the scaffold, and a third for quiet standing." ‡ It was usual also for the bearward to parade the streets with his animal, who had frequently a monkey on his back and was preceded by a minstrel. The bear was generally complimented with the name of his keeper: thus, in Shakspeare's time, there was a celebrated one at Paris

* Chalmers's Apology, p. 380.

† Perambulation of Kent, 1570, p. 248.

‡ Warton's Life of Sir T. Pope, p. 85.

Garden called Sackerson. "I have seen Sackerson loose," says Slender, "twenty times; and have taken him by the chain: but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shriek'd at it, that it pass'd:—but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favoured rough things;" * in the "Puritan" published in 1607, occurs one named George Stone; and in the "Humorous Lovers," by the Duke of Newcastle printed in 1617, Tom of Lincoln is the appellation of another.

A diversion infinitely more elegant and pleasing in all its accompaniments, once of great utility, and unattended with the smallest vestige of barbarism or inhumanity, we have now to record as resulting from the use of the long bow, which, though greatly on the decline, in the days of Elizabeth, as a weapon of warfare, still lingered amongst us as a species of amusement. Various attempts, indeed, had been made by the nearly immediate predecessors of Elizabeth, to revive the use of the long bow as a military weapon; but with very partial success:—

"The most famous, prudent, politike and grave prince K. Henry the 7," says Robinson, "was the first Phenix in chusing out a number of chiefe Archers to give daily attendance upon his person, whom he named his Garde. But the high and mighty renowned prince his son, K. H. 8, (ann. 1509) not onely with great prowes and praise proceeded in that which his father had begon; but also added greater dignity unto the same, like a most roial renowned David, enacting a good and godly statute (ann. 33. H. 8. cap. 9) for the use and exercise of shooting in every degree. And further more for the maintenance of the same laudable exercise in this honourable city of London by his gracious charter confirmed unto the worshipful citizens of the same, this your now famous order of Knightes of Prince Arthure's Round Table or Society: like as in his life time when he saw a good Archer indeede, he chose him and ordained such a one for a knight of the same order." †

To this "Auncient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure," as it was termed, and to which Shakspeare alludes, under the character of Justice Shallow, in the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, Archery owed, for some time, considerable support; but ultimately it contributed to hasten its decline. Under the auspices of Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII., and who was so expert a bowman, that every skilful shooter was complimented with his name, the society flourished abundantly; its captain being honoured with his title, and the other members being termed his knights. His brother Henry was equally attached to the art, but unfortunately, having appointed a splendid match at shooting with the long bow, at Windsor, an inhabitant of Shoreditch, London, joining the archers, exhibited such extraordinary skill, that the King, delighted with his performance, humorously gave him the title of Duke of Shoreditch, an appellation which not only superseded the former title, but, being copied by the inferior members, in assuming the rank of Marquis, Earl, etc., threw such a degree of burlesque and ridicule over the business, as finally brought contempt upon the art itself.

The Society, however, still subsisted with much magnificence during the reign of Elizabeth; and in the very year that Robinson published his book in support of Archery, namely, in 1583,

"A grand shooting match was held in London, and the captain of the archers assuming his title of Duke of Shoreditch, summoned a suit of nominal nobility under the titles of Marquis of Barlo, of Clerkenwell, of Islington, of Hoxton, of Shacklewel, and Earl of Pancrass, etc., and these meeting together at the appointed time, with their different companies, proceeded in a pompous march from Merchant Taylor's Hall, consisting of three thousand archers, sumptuously apparelled; nine hundred and forty-two of them having chains of gold about their necks. This splendid company was guarded by four thousand whiffers and billmen, besides pages and footmen. They passed through Broad-street, the residence of their captain, and thence into Moorfields, by Finsbury, and

* M. W. of Windsor, act i. sc. 1.

† "The Auncient Order, Societie, and Vnitie Laudable, of Prince Arthure, and his knightly Armoury of the Round Table. With a Threefold Assertion frendly in favour and furtherance of English Archery at this day. Translated and Collected by R. R." (Richard Robinson) 4to. 1583.—Vide British Bibliographer, vol. i. p. 125, 127.

so on to Smithfield, where having performed several evolutions, they shot at a target for honour." *

Notwithstanding this brilliant celebration, it appears that, thirteen years afterwards, the disuse of archery was so general, that the "Companies of Bowyers and Fletchers" made heavy complaints, and procured a work to be written, in order to place before "the nobility and gentlemen of England," their distress, and deprivation of subsistence, from the neglect of the bow. The work is entitled, "A brieft Treatise, To proove the necessitie and excellence of the Vse of Arche-rie. Abstracted out of ancient and modern writers, by R. S. Perused and allowed by Auctoritie." 4to, 1596. This was one of the last attempts to revive the bow as a weapon of defence, and it records a contemporary and successful effort to repel cavalry by its adoption on the part of a rebel force.

"About Bartholomew tyde last, 1595," relates the author, "there came out of Scotland one James Forgeson, bowyer to the King of Scots, who credibly reported, that about two years past, certaine rebelles did rise there against the King, who sent against them five hundred horsemen well appointed. They meeting three hundred of the rebel's bowmen, encountered each with other, when the bow men slue two hundred and fourscore of their horses, and killed, wounded, and sore hurt most part of the King's men. Whereupon the said Forgeson was sent hether from the King with commission to buy up ten thousande bowes and bowstaves: but because he could not speed heer, he went over into the East countries for them." †

The *Toxophilus* of Ascham, first published in 1544, was written in order "that stil, according to the olde wont of Englande, youth should use it for the most honest pastime in peace, that men might handle it as a most sure weapon in warre." P. 55. The latter of these purposes so completely failed, that the use of the bow as an offensive or defensive weapon of warfare totally ceased in the time of James the First: but the former was partially gained, as the treatise of Ascham certainly contributed to prolong the reign of archery as a mere recreation, though it could not retrieve its character as an instrument for the destruction of game. So early, indeed, as 1531, we learn from Sir Thomas Elyot's "Booke named the Governour," that crossbows and guns had then superseded the long-bow, in the sports of the field:

"Verylye I suppose," says he, "that before crosbowes and handegunnes were broughte into this realme, by the sleighte of our enemies, to the entent to distroye the noble defence of archerye, continuall use of shootynge in the longe bowe made the feate soo perfecte and exacte among englyshemen, that thei than as surely and soone kyllled suche game whiche thei lysted to have, as thei nowe can do with the crossebowe or gunne." ‡

The cross-bow was the fashionable instrument for killing game, even with the ladies, in the days of Elizabeth; the Queen was peculiarly fond of the sport, and her example was eagerly followed by the female part of her court. Shakspeare represents the Princess and her ladies, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, thus employed (act. iv. sc. 1), and Mr. Lodge informs us, through the medium of a letter, written by Sir Francis Leake in 1605, that the Countess of Shrewsbury, and the ladies of the Cavendish family, were ardently attached to this diversion. §

That the pastime of shooting with the long bow was often commuted, in the capital, for amusements of a much less innocent nature, we learn from Stowe, who attributes the decline of archery, as a diversion, to the enclosure of common grounds in the vicinity of the metropolis:—

"What should I speake," says he, "of the ancient dayly exercises in the long bow by citizens of this citie, now almoste cleane left off and forsaken: I over passe it: for by the meanes of closing

* Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 62., from Strype's *London*, vol. i. p. 250.—In 1682, appeared "A remembrance of the worthy show and shooting by the Duke of Shoreditch and his associates the worshipful citizens of London, upon Tuesday the 17th of September, 1583, set forth according to the truth thereof, to the everlasting honour of the game of shooting in the long bow. B. W. M."

† *British Bibliographer*, vol. i. p. 448.

‡ Edit. 1553. p. 83.

§ *Illustrations of British History*, vol. iii. p. 295.

in of common grounds, our Archers for want of roome to shoote abroad, creep into bowling allies and ordinarie dicing-houses neerer home, where they have roome enough to hazard their money at unlawfull games." *

Among the amusements more peculiarly belonging to the metropolis, and which better than any other exhibits the fashionable mode, at that time, of disposing of the day, we may enumerate the custom of publicly parading in the middle aisle of St. Paul's Cathedral. During the reign of Elizabeth and James, Paul's Walk, as it was called, was daily frequented by the nobility, gentry, and professional men; here, from ten to twelve in the forenoon, and from three to six in the afternoon, they met to converse on business, politics, or pleasure; and hither too, in order to acquire fashions, form assignations for the gaming table, or shun the grasp of the bailiff, came the gallant, the gamester, and the debtor, the stale knight, and the captain out of service; and here it was that Falstaff purchased Bardolph; "I bought him," says the jolly knight, "at Paul's." †

Of the various purposes for which this temple was frequented by the loungers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Decker has left us a most entertaining account, and from his tract on this subject, published in 1609, we shall extract a few passages which throw no incurious light on the follies and dissipation of the age.

The supposed tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, but in reality that of Guy Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, appears to have been a privileged part of the Cathedral:—

"The Duke's tomb," observes Decker, addressing the gallant, "is a sanctuary; and will keep you alive from worms, and land rats, that long to be feeding on your carcass: there you may spend your legs in winter a whole afternoon; converse, plot, laugh, and talk any thing; jest at your creditor, even to his face; and in the evening, even by lamp-light, steal out; and so cozen a whole covey of abominable catch-polls." ‡

Such was the resort of the male fashionable world to this venerable Gothic pile, that it was customary for trades-people to frequent its aisles for the purpose of collecting the dresses of the day.

"If you determine to enter into a new suit, warn your tailor to attend you in Pauls, who, with his hat in his hand, shall like a spy discover the stuff, colour, and fashion of any doublet or hose that dare be seen there, and, stepping behind a pillar to fill his table books with those notes, will presently send you into the world an accomplished man; by which means you shall wear your clothes in print with the first edition." §

The author even condescends to instruct his beau, when he has obtained his suit, how best to exhibit it in St. Paul's, and concludes by pointing out other recourses for killing time, on withdrawing from the cathedral.

"Bend your course directly in the middle line, that the whole body of the church may appear to be yours; where, in view of all, you may publish your suit in what manner you affect most, either with the slide of your cloak from the one shoulder: and then you must, as 'twere in anger, suddenly snatch at the middle of the inside, if it be taffeta at the least; and so by that means your costly lining is betrayed, or else by the pretty advantage of compliment. But one note by the way do I especially woo you to, the neglect of which makes many of our gallants cheap and ordinary; that by no means you be seen above four turns; but in the fifth make yourself away, either in some of the semsters' shops, the new tobacco-office, or amongst the booksellers, where, if you cannot read, exercise your smoke, and inquire who has writ against this divine weed, &c." **

After dinner it was necessary that the finished coxcomb should return to Paul's in a new dress:

"After dinner you may appear again, having translated yourself out of your English cloth into a light Turkey program, if you have that happiness of shifting; and then be seen, for a turn or

* Survey of London, 1618, p. 162.

† The Gull's Horn-book, 4to. 1609. p. 99.

** Ibid. p. 95, 96.

‡ Henry IV. Part ii. act i. sc. 2.

§ The Gull's Horn-book, p. 101, 102.

two, to correct your teeth with some quill or silver instrument, and to cleanse your gums with a wrought handkerchief: it skills not whether you dined, or no; that is best known to your stomach; or in what place you dined; though it were with cheese, of your own mother's making, in your chamber or study."*

The fopperies exhibited in a place, which ought to have been closed against such unhallowed inmates, rival, if not exceed, all that modern puppyism can produce. The directions which Decker gives to his gallant on quitting St. Paul's in the forenoon, clearly prove, that the loungers of Shakspeare's time are not surpassed, either in affectation or the assumption of petty consequence, by the same worthless class of the nineteenth century:

"In which departure," enjoins the satirist, "if by chance you either encounter, or aloof off throw your inquisitive eye upon any knight or squire, being your familiar, salute him not by his name of Sir such a one, or so; but call him Ned, or Jack, &c. This will set off your estimation with great men: and if, though there be a dozen companies between you, 'tis the better, he call aloud to you, for that is most genteel, to know where he shall find you at two o'clock; tell him at such an ordinary, or such; and be sure to name those are dearest, and whither none but your gallants resort."†

A still more offensive mode of displaying this ostentatious folly, sprang from a custom then general, and even now not altogether obsolete, of demanding spur-money from any person entering the cathedral during divine service, with spurs on. This was done by the younger choristers, and, it seems, frequently gave birth to the following gross violation of decency:

"Never be seen to mount the steps into the quire, but upon a high festival day, to prefer the fashion of your doublet; and especially if the singing-boys seem to take note of you; for they are able to buzz your praises above their anthems, if their voices have not lost their maiden heads: but be sure your silver spurs dog your heels, and then the boys will swarm about you like so many white butterflies;‡ when you in the open quire shall draw forth a perfumed embroidered purse, the glorious sight of which will entice many countrymen from their devotion to wondering: and quoit silver into the boy's hands, that it may be heard above the first lesson, although it be read in a voice as big as one of the great organs."§

The tract from which we have taken these curious illustrations, contains also a passage which serves to show, that London, in the time of our poet, was not unprovided with exhibitions of the docility, sagacity, and tricks of animals; and this, with similar relations, will tend to prove, that the ingenious Mr. Astley, and the Preceptor of the learned pig, had been anticipated both in skill and perseverance. Decker, after conducting his "mere country gentleman" to the top of St. Paul's, proceeds thus:—

"Hence you may descend, to talk about the *horse* that went up; and strive, if you can, to know his keeper; take the day of the month, and the number of the steps; and suffer yourself to believe verily that it was not a horse, but something else in the likeness of one: which wonders you may publish, when you return in the country, to the great amazement of all farmer's daughters, that will almost swoon at the report, and never recover till their bans be asked twice in the church."**

This is the dancing-horse alluded to by Shakspeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* (act. i. sc. 2); an English bay gelding, fourteen years old, and named Morocco. He had been taught by one Banks, a Scotchman, and their fame was spread over a great part of Europe; "if Banks had lived in older times," remarks Sir Walter Raleigh, "he would have shamed all the inchanters in the world; for whosoever was most famous among them, could never master or instruct any beast as he did." It was the misfortune, indeed, of this man and his horse to be taken for enchanters; while at Paris, they had a narrow escape, being imprisoned for dealing with the devil, and at length liberated, on the magistrates

* Gull's Horn-book, p. 97, 98.

† They are thus called, from wearing *white surplices*.

** Gull's Horn-book, p. 104.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 97.

§ Gull's Horn-book, p. 99, 100.

discovering that the whole was merely the effect of human art; but at Rome they fell a sacrifice to the more rivetted superstitions of the people, and were both burnt as magicians; a fate to which Ben Jonson adverts in the following lines:—

“ But amongst those Tiberts, who do you think there was?
Old *Bankes* the juggler, our Pythagoras,
Grave tutor to the learned horse. Both which,
Being, beyond sea, burned for one witch,
Their spirits transmigrated to a cat.” *

Nor were the feats of this sagacious horse unrivalled by the wonderful acquirements of other animals. The praise of Morocco is frequently combined by the poets and satirists of the age, with an account of the extraordinary tricks of his contemporary brutes: thus John Taylor, the water-poet, places Holden's camel on a level with Banks's horse:—

“ Old Holden's *camel*, or fine Banks his *cut* ;”

and Bishop Hall, in his satires, brings us acquainted with a sagacious elephant, to which he kindly adds a couple of wonders of a different description; a bullock with two tails, and a fiddling friar. He is describing the metamorphosis which London had produced in the person and manners of a young farmer, and adds,

“ The tenants wonder at their landlord's sonne,
And blesse them at so sudden coming on,
More than who vies his pence to view some trick
Of strange *Marocco's* dumb arithmetick,
Of the young *elephant*, or *two tail'd steere*,
Or the rigg'd camel, or the *fiddling frere*.” †

The catalogue of wonders, monsters, and tricks, may be augmented by a reference to Ben Jonson, who, in his “*Bartholomew Fair*,” among other spectacles, speaks of a Bull with five legs and two pizzles, Dogs dancing the morrice, and a Hare beating the tabor. Act v. sc. 4.

But of all the amusements which distinguish the age of Shakspeare, none could vie in richness, splendour, or invention, with the costly spectacles, called Masques, and Pageants. The frequency of these exhibitions during the reigns of Elizabeth and James is astonishing, if we consider the immense expense which was lavished on their production; the most celebrated poets and the most skilful artists often assisted in their formation; nor was it uncommon to behold nobility, or even royalty itself, assuming the part of actors in these romantic entertainments.

What a gorgeous and voluptuous court could effect, in seconding the efforts of consummate skill, through the medium of machinery, decoration, and dress, may be collected from the numerous Masques of Ben Jonson, who seems to feel the inadequacy of language to express the beauty, grandeur, and sumptuousness of the devices employed on these occasions. Thus, in his “*Hymenæi, or the Solemnities of Masque and Barriers at a Marriage*,” he manifestly labours to paint the scene, and, at length, professes himself unequal to the task of conveying the impressions which it had made upon him.

“ Hitherto,” says he, “ extended the first night's solemnity, whose grace in the execution left not where to add to it, with wishing: I mean (nor do I court them) in those, that sustained the nobler parts. Such was the exquisite performance, as (beside the pomp, splendor, or what we may call apparelling of such presentments), that alone (had all else been absent) was of power to surprise with delight, and steal away the spectators from themselves. Nor was there wanting whatsoever might give to the furniture or complement; either in riches, or strangeness of the habits, delicacy of dances, magnificence of the scene, or divine rapture of musicke. Only the

* Ben Jonson's Works, 1640. Epigrammes, p. 46

† Chalmers's English Poets, vol. v. p. 274. col. 2. Satires, book iv. sat. 2.

envy was, that it lasted not still ; or, (now it is past) cannot by imagination, much less description, be recovered to a part of that spirit it had in the gliding by." *

Nothing, indeed, shows the romantic disposition of Elizabeth, and, indeed, of her times, more evidently than the Triumph, as it was called, devised and performed with great solemnity, in honour of the French commissioners for the Queen's marriage with the Duke of Anjou, in 1581. The contrivance was for four of her principal courtiers, under the quaint appellation of "four foster-children of Desire," to besiege and carry, by dint of arms, "The Fortress of Beauty;" intending, by this courtly enigma, nothing less than the Queen's Majesty's own person. The actors in this famous triumph were, the Earl of Arundel, the Lord Windsor, Master Philip Sidney, and Master Fulk Grevil. And the whole was conducted so entirely in the spirit and language of knight-errantry, that nothing in the Arcadia itself is more romantic.

The example of the court was followed with equal profusion by the citizens, and various corporate bodies of the capital, who contended with each other in the cost bestowed on these performances. In 1604, when King James and his Queen passed triumphantly from the Tower to Westminster, the citizens erected seven gates or arches, in different parts of the space through which the procession had to proceed. Over the first arch

"Was represented the true likeness of all the notable houses, towers, and steeples, within the citie of London—The sixth arche or gate of triumph was erected above the Conduit in Fleete-Streete, whereon the Globe of the world was seen to move, etc. At Temple-bar a seventh arche or gate was erected, the fore-front whereof was proportioned in every respect like a Temple, being dedicated to Janus, etc.—The citie of Westminster, and dutchy of Lancaster, at the Strand, had erected the invention of a rainbow, the moone, sunne, and starres, advanced between two Pyramids."

In 1612-13, the gentlemen of the inns of court presented a masque in honour of the marriage of the Elector Palatine of the Rhine, with the Princess Elizabeth, of which the poetry was the composition of Chapman, and the machinery the invention of Inigo Jones. The expense of this pageantry amounted, according to Dugdale,† to one thousand and eighty-six pounds, eight shillings and eleven pence, and was conducted with uncommon splendour.

"First rode," relates Howe, "fiftie choyce gentlemen richly attyred, and as gallantly mounted, with every one his footemen to attend him ; These rode very stately like a vauntguard." Next to these appeared an antique or mock-masque. "After them came two chariots triumphal, very pleasant and full of state, wherein rode the choyce musicians of this kingdome, in robes like to the Virginian priests, with sundry devises, all pleasant and significant, with two rankes of torches : Then came the chiefe maskers with great State in white Indian habit, or like the great princes of Barbary, richly imbrodered with the golden sun, with suteable ornaments in all poynts, about their necks were ruffs of feathers, spangled and beset with pearle and silver, and upon their heads lofty coronets suitable to the rest." ‡

Nor were these fanciful and ever varying pageants productive merely of amuse-

* The Workes of Benjamin Jonson, folio. 1640. Masques, p. 143.—Of the costly magnificence of this spectacle, an idea may be formed from that part which relates to the attire of the actors : "that of the Lords," describes the poet, "had part of it taken from the antique Greek statue ; mixed with some moderne additions : which made it both gracefull and strange. On their heads they wore Persick crowns that were with scroles of gold-plate turned outward, and wreathed about with a carnation and silver net lawne ; the one end of which hung carelessly on the left shoulder ; the other was tricked up before, in severall degrees of folds, between the plates, and set with rich jewels, and great pearles. Their bodies were of carnation cloth of silver, richly wrought, and cut to expresse the naked, in manner of the Greek Thorax ; girt under the breasts with a broad belt of cloth of gold imbroydered, and fastened before with jewels : Their Labels were of white cloth of silver, laced, and wrought curiously between, suitable to the upper halfe of their sleeves ; whose nether parts, with their bases, were of watchet cloth of silver, chev'roned all over with lace. Their Mantils were of severall colour'd silkes, distinguishing their qualities as they were coupled in paires ; the first, skie colour ; the second, pearle colour ; the third, flame colour ; the fourth, tawny : and these cut in leaves, which were subtilly tack'd up, and imbroydered with Oo's, and between every ranck of leaves, a broad silver lace. They were fastened on the right shoulder, and fell compasse down the back in gracious folds, and were again tyed with a round knot, to the fastening of their swords. Upon their legs they wore silver greaves." P. 143.

† Origines Judiciales, p. 346, edit. 1671.

‡ Stowe's Annales, p. 1006. edit. 1631.

ment; they had higher aims, and more important effects, and, while ostensibly constructed for the purposes of compliment and entertainment, either indirectly inculcated some lesson of moral wisdom, or more immediately obtained their end, by impersonating the vices and the virtues, and exhibiting a species of ethic drama.

They had also the merit of conveying no inconsiderable fund of instruction from the stores of mythology, history, and philosophy. Of this the masques of Jonson afford abundant proof, containing, as they do, not only the common superficial knowledge on these subjects, but displaying such a mass of recondite learning, illustrative of the manners, opinions, customs, and antiquities of the ancient world, as would serve to extend the information of the educated, while they delighted and instructed the body of the people.

To these classical diversions, these *eruditæ voluptates*, which were remarkably frequent during the whole era of Shakspeare's existence, we may confidently ascribe some portion of that intimacy with the records of history, the fictions of paganism, and the reveries of philosophy, which our poet so copiously exhibits throughout his poems and plays, as well as no small accession to the wild and fantastic visionary forms that so pre-eminently delight us in the golden dreams of his imagination.

Among the numerous scenes and descriptions which owe their birth, in our author's dramas, to these superb combinations of mechanism and poesy, we shall select two passages that more peculiarly point out the manner in which he has availed himself of their scenery and arrangement.

"There is a passage in *Antony and Cleopatra*," observes Mr. Warton, "where the metaphor is exceedingly beautiful; but where the beauty both of the expression and the allusion is lost, unless we recollect the frequency and the nature of these shows (the Pageants) in Shakspeare's age. I must cite the whole of the context, for the sake of the last hemistich,

"*Ant.* Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapour sometime, like a bear or lion;
A towred citadel, a pendant rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air: Thou hast seen these signs;
They are *Black Vesper's Pageants*."

This illustrious critic, however, should have continued the quotation somewhat further; for the next three lines include a piece of imagery immediately taken from the same source, and more worthy of remark than any preceding allusion:—

"*Eros.* Ay, my lord.
"*Ant.* That, which is now a horse; even with a thought,
The *Rack* dislimns; and makes it indistinct,
As water is in water." Act iv. sc. 12.

The meaning of the expression, "The *Rack* dislimns," is clearly ascertained by a reference to Ben Jonson's "*Hymenæal Masque*" already quoted, in which occurs the following striking passage:—

"Here the upper part of the scene, which was all of clouds, and made artificially to swell and ride like the *Rack*, began to open, and the air clearing, in the top thereof was discovered Juno sitting in a throne, supported by two beautiful peacocks.—Round about her sate the spirits of the ayre, in several colours, making musique. Above her the region of fire, with a continual motion, was seen to whirl circularly, and Jupiter standing in the top (figured the heaven) brandishing his thunder. Beneath her the rainbow Iris, and, on the two sides eight ladies, attired richly, and alike, in the most celestial colours, who represented her powers, as she is the Governess of Marriage." *

This extract, also, together with the one given in a preceding page, descriptive of the Citizen's Pageant in honour of James and his Queen, 1604, will throw a

* The Workes of Benjamin Jonson, fol. 164. Masques, p. 125.

strong light on a celebrated passage in the *Tempest*, and fully prove our poet's extensive obligations to these very ingenious devices :—

“ Our revels now are ended: These our actors,
As I foretold you, were *all spirits*, and
Are *melted into air, into thin air*:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capt *towers*, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn *temples*, the great *globe* itself,
Yea all, which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this *insubstantial pageant* faded,
Leave not a *rack* behind.” Act iv. sc. 1.

The “*towers*,” the “*temples*,” and “the great globe itself” of these lines, we find exhibited in the pageant of 1604, eight or ten years anterior to the representation of this play; while in the masque of Jonson, we perceive the occasion of its performance to have been similar to that which gave origin to the “*insubstantial pageant*” of Prospero, both being Hymenæal Masques, both likewise including among their actors the characters of Iris and Juno, and both being accompanied by “*spirits of the ayre making musick*.”

Here the term rack, in both quotations from our poet, manifestly appears, from the passage in Ben Jonson's masque, to have been drawn from the machinery of the pageant, and to have implied masses of clouds in motion; the lines from Antony and Cleopatra, alluding to their mutability and endless diversity, and those in the *Tempest* importing their utter insignificance and instability when compared with the more durable materials of the pageant; and hence emphatically founding on their evanescence, a complete picture of entire dissolution, that, like the *insubstantial pageant* which had just vanished from their eyes, not only towers, palaces, temples, and the globe itself should disappear, but even not the most trifling part of the fabric of the world, not even the passing clouds, the fleeting rack, should be left behind, as a memorial of existence.

Upon no occasions were these imposing spectacles, the masque, the pageant, and the triumph, gotten up with more gorgeous splendour, than during the Progresses which Elizabeth so frequently made throughout the course of her long reign. Every nobleman's house was thrown open for her reception whilst thus engaged, and the keenest rivalry was excited amongst them, with regard to the expense, magnificence, variety, and duration of the entertainments which they lavished upon her. Nor was the Queen at all scrupulous in accepting their invitations, for she considered this hospitality, however ruinous to the individual, as a necessary attention, and, in fact, entered the mansions of her courtiers with the same feelings of property, as when she sate down beneath the roof of what might more strictly be termed her own palaces. That her subjects were complaisant enough to acquiesce in this assumption, is evident from a passage in Harrison's “*Description of England*,” who mentioning the variety of the Queen's houses, adds,—

“ But what shall I need to take upon me to repeat all, and tell what houses the Queen's majesty hath? Sith all is hers; and when it pleaseth hir in the summer season to recreate herself abroad, and view the state of the cuntrye, and hear the complaints of hir unjust officers or substitutes, every nobleman's house is hir palace, where she continueth during pleasure, and till she returne againe to some of hir owne.” One of the most striking proofs of the frequency and oppression of these royal visits, has been recorded by Mr. Nichols, who tells us, “that she was twelve times at Theobald's, which was a very convenient distance from London. Each visit cost Cecil two or three thousand pounds; the Queen lying there at his Lordship's charge, sometimes three weeks, or a month, or six weeks together.” *

These Progresses, however, of which Mr. Nichols has presented us with a most curious and ample collection, serve, more than any other documents which his—

* Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. Preface, p. 19.

tory could afford, to impress us with an accurate and interesting idea of the hospitality, diversions, costume, and domestic economy, of the great Baronial Chieftains of our last romantic reign. From them, observes their very ingenious editor, "much of the manners of the times may be learned. They give us a view into the interior of the noble families, display their state in house-keeping, and other articles, and set before our eyes their magnificent mansions long since gone to decay, or supplanted by others of the succeeding age."

Perhaps the most splendid reception which Elizabeth met with, in the whole course of her Progresses, was at Kenilworth castle, in Warwickshire, the seat of the once all-powerful Earl of Leicester. Some slight notice of this place, as having probably attracted the attention of young Shakspeare, during the visit of Her Majesty, has already been given in a former part of our work; but it will be necessary here, in order to impart a just conception of the costly entertainments which awaited the Queen on these excursions, to give a brief catalogue of the ten days "princely pleasures" of Kenilworth castle.

Her Majesty reached Lord Leicester's on Saturday, the ninth of July, 1575, and was greeted, on her approach to the castle, by a Sibyl, prophesying prosperity to her government. Six giants stood ready to receive her at the outer gate apparently blowing trumpets, which were in reality sounded by persons placed behind them, while the Porter, representing Hercules, addressed her in a metrical speech, "proclaiming open gates and free passage to all, and yielding to her on his knees, his club, keys and office." Arriving at the base court, a female figure, appropriately dressed, "came all over the pool, being so conveyed, that it seemed she had gone upon the water; she was attended by two water-nymphs, and calling herself the Lady of the Lake," complimented Her Majesty, who, passing on to the inner court, crossed the bridge, which was ornamented with seven pillars on each side, exhibiting on their summits, birds in cages, fruits in silver bowls, corn in similar vessels, wine and grapes in silver pots, fishes in trays, weapons of war, and musical instruments, the respective gifts of Silvanus, Pomona, Ceres, Bacchus, Neptune, Mars, and Apollo. Then, preceded by a noble band of music, the Queen crossed the inner court, alighted from her horse, and entered her apartments.

On Sunday evening, she beheld a grand display of fire-works, a species of amusement which had been little known previous to her reign: "after a warning piece or two," says Laneham, "was a blaze of burning darts flying to and fro, beams of stars coruscant, streams and hail of fire-sparks, lightnings of wild fire on the water; and on the land, flight and shot of thunder-bolts, all with such continuance, terror, and vehemence, the heavens thundered, the waters surged, and the earth shook."

Monday was occupied by hunting, conducted on a large and magnificent scale, during which Her Majesty was ingeniously complimented through the medium of several sylvan devices. Music, dancing, and pageantry on the water, formed the diversions of the Tuesday. Hunting and field sports consumed the Wednesday; bear-baiting, tumbling, and fire-works were the recreations of the Thursday; and, the weather not permitting any out-door diversions on Friday, the time was spent in banquetting, shows, and domestic games. On Saturday, the morning being fine, the Queen was highly entertained by the representation of a country bride-ale, by running at the quintain, and by the "Old Coventry Play of Hock Thursday;" while the evening diversions were a regular play, a banquet, and a masque.

The amusement of hunting was resumed on the Monday, returning from which Her Majesty was highly gratified by a pageant on the water, exhibiting, among other spectacles, Arion seated upon a dolphin twenty-four feet in length, and singing a song, accompanied by the music of six performers, who were snugly lodged in the belly of the fish.

The Coventry play not having been finished on the preceding Saturday, was

repeated, at the desire of the Queen, on the Tuesday, and on Wednesday the 20th, she bade adieu to Kenilworth, greatly delighted with the hospitality and princely splendour of its noble owner.*

The Hall and the Tiltyard were two of the most striking features at Kenilworth, and they designate with sufficient precision two of the leading characteristics of the age of Elizabeth, its hospitality, and attachment to chivalric costume; the former was carried on upon a scale to which modern usage is a perfect stranger; for, as Bishop Hurd remarks, "the same bell, that called the great man to his table, invited the neighbourhood all around, and proclaimed a holiday to the whole country;"† and the latter cherished its predilections, and romantic ardour, by cultivating tilting, the sole remaining offspring of the gorgeous tournament, with scientific skill. The latter half of the sixteenth, and the commencement of the seventeenth, century, saw indeed the diversion of running at the ring carried to its highest degree of perfection, from which, however, it very soon afterwards began to decline, and may be said to have expired with the reign of James the First.

Yet the influence of this amusement, in exciting the heroism of the Elizabethan age, was by no means inconsiderable, and we may view the tilt-yard of Kenilworth, with the eyes of Dr. Hurd, "as a nursery of brave men, a very seed-plot of warriors and heroes.—And, as whimsical a figure as a young tilter may make in a modern eye, who will say that the virtue was not formed here, that triumphed at Axell, and bled at Zutphen?"‡

To complete the picture of Kenilworth—castle during this festive period, it would be desirable, could we ascertain what were the domestic economy and usages which were adopted in so large a household, and how the Queen, her ladies, and attendants, contrived to pass the hours, when the weather forbade exterior diversions, and when the masque, the banquet, and the fete had exhausted their attractions. Fortunately we possess a sketch of this kind, from the communicative pen of Laneham, who seems to have been gifted, if we may trust his own account, with great powers of pleasing, and to have enjoyed, in an extraordinary degree, the favour and confidence of the high-born dames of honour who followed in the train of Elizabeth.

"Methought it my part," he relates in a letter to his friend, "somewhat to impart unto you how it is here with me, and how I lead my life, which indeed is this:—

"A mornings I rise ordinarily at seven o'clock: Then ready, I go into the Chapel; soon after eight, I get me commonly into my Lord's chamber, or into my Lord's presidents. There at the cupboard, after I have eaten the manchets served overnight for livery (for I dare be as bold, I promise you, as any of my friends the servants there: and indeed could I have fresh, if I would tarry; but I am of wont jolly and dry a mornings): I drink me up a good bol of ale: when in a sweet pot it is defecated by all night's standing, the drink is the better, take that of me: and a morsel in a morning, with a sound draught, is very wholesome and good for the eye-sight: Then I am as fresh all the forenoon after, as had I eaten a whole piece of beef. Now, Sir, if the Council sit, I am at hand; wait at an inch, I warrant you: If any man make babbling, 'Peace,' say I, 'wot ye where ye are?' If I take a listener, or a pryer in at the chinks or at the lock-hole, I am by and by in the bones of him: But now they keep good order, they know me well enough: If a be a friend, or such a one as I like, I make him sit down by me on a form or a chest; let the rest walk, a God's name.

"And here doth my language now and then stand me in good stead: My French, my Spanish, my Dutch, and my Latin: Sometime among Ambassadors' men, if their Master be within the Council: Sometime with the Ambassador himself, if he bid call his lacky, or ask me what's a clock; and I warrant ye I answer him roundly; that they marvel to see such a fellow there: then laugh I and say nothing: Dinner and supper I have twenty places to go to, and heartily prayed to: Sometime get I to Master Pinner; by my faith, a worshipful Gentleman, and as careful for his charge as any her Highness hath: there find I alway good store of very good viands; we eat, and be merry, thank God and the Queen. Himself in feeding very temperate and moderate as

* This enumeration is abridged from Laneham's Letter, and the "Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth Castle," reprinted in Nichols's Progresses, vol. i.

† Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. i. p. 160. edit. 1788.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 180.

ye shall see any : and yet, by your leave, of a dish, as a cold pigeon or so, that hath come to him at meat more than he looked for, I have seen him een so by and by surfeit, as he hath plucked off his napkin, wiped his knife, and eat not a morsel more ; like enough to stick in his stomach a two days after : (some hard message from the higher officers ; perceive ye me ?) upon search, his faithful dealing and diligence hath found him faultless.

“ In afternoons and a nights, sometime am I with the right worshipful Sir George Howard, as good a Gentleman as any lives : And sometime, at my good Lady Sidney’s chamber, a Noblewoman that I am as much bound unto, as any poor man may be unto so gracious a Lady ; and sometime in some other place. But always among the Gentlewomen by my good will ; (O, ye know that comes always of a gentle spirit :) And when I see company according, then can I be as lively too : Sometime I foot it with dancing : now with my gittern, and else with my cittern, then at the virginals : Ye know nothing comes amiss to me : Then carol I up a song withal ; that by and by they come flocking about me like bees to honey : And ever they cry, ‘ Another, good Laneham, another ! ’ Shall I tell you ? When I see Mistress—— (A, see a mad Knave ; I had almost told all !) that she gives once but an eye or an ear ; why then, man, am I blest ; my courage, my cunning is doubled : She says, sometime, ‘ She likes it ; ’ and then I like it much the better ; it doth me good to hear how well I can do. And to say truth ; what with mine eyes, as I can amorously gloat it, with my Spanish sospires, my French heighes, mine Italian dulcets, my Dutch hoves, my double releas, my high reaches, my fine feigning, my deep diapason, my wanton warbles, my running, my timing, my tuning, and my twinkling, I can gracify the matters as well as the proudest of them, and was yet never stained, I thank God : By my troth, Countryman, it is some time high midnight, ere I can get from them. And thus have I told ye most of my trade, all the live-long day : what will ye more, God save the Queene and my Lord.” *

Of this magnificent castle, the unrivalled abode of baronial hospitality, and chivalric pageantry, who can avoid lamenting the present irreparable decay, or forbear apostrophising the mouldering reliques in the pathetic and picturesque language, which Bishop Hurd has placed in the mouth of his admired Addison ?

“ Where, one might ask, are the tilts and tournaments, the princely shows and sports, which were once so proudly celebrated within these walls ? Where are the pageants, the studied devices, and emblems of curious invention, that set the court at a gaze, and even transported the high soul of our Elizabeth ? Where now, pursued he (pointing to that which was formerly a canal, but at present is only a meadow, with a small rivulet running through it), where is the floating island, the blaze of torches that eclipsed the day, the lady of the lake, the silken nymphs her attendants, with all the other fantastic exhibitions surpassing even the whimsies of the wildest romance ? What now is become of the revelry of feasting ? of the minstrelsy that took the ear so delightfully as it babbled along the valley, or floated on the surface of this lake ? See there the smokeless kitchens, stretching to a length that might give room for the sacrifice of a hecatomb ; the vaulted hall, which mirth and jollity have set so often in a uproar ; the rooms of state, and the presence-chamber : what are they now but void and tenantless ruins, clasped with ivy, open to wind and weather, and representing to the eye nothing but the ribs and carcase, as it were, of their former state ? And see, said he, that proud gate-way, once the mansion of a surly porter, who, partaking of the pride of his lord, made the crowds wait, and refused admittance, perhaps, to nobles whom fear or interest drew to these walls, to pay their homage to their master : see it now the residence of a poor tenant, who turns the key but to let himself out to his daily labour, to admit him to a short meal, and secure his nightly slumbers.” †

To this account of some of the principal diversions of the court and the metropolis, we have now to subjoin, in a compass corresponding with the scale of our work, a clear, but necessarily a brief view, of an amusement which, more than any other, is calculated to interest and to influence every class of society. The State, Economy, and Usages of the Stage, therefore, during the age of Shakspeare, will occupy the remainder of this chapter, forming an introduction to a sketch of dramatic poetry, at the period of Shakspeare’s commencement as a writer for the stage.

The reader is probably aware, from the very copious and bulky, though somewhat indigested, collections, which have been published on this subject, that the following detail, consisting of an arrangement of minute facts, and which aims at

* Nichols’s Progresses, vol. i. Laneham’s Letter, p. 81—84.

† Hurd’s Moral and Political Dialogues, vol. i. p. 148—150.

nothing more than a neat and lucid compendium of an intricate topic, must necessarily, at almost every step, be indebted to previous researches; in order, therefore, to obviate a continual parade of reference, let it suffice, that we acknowledge the basis of our disquisition to have been derived from the labours of Steevens and Malone, as included in the last variorum edition of Shakspeare; from the two Apologies of Mr. Chalmers; from Decker, as reprinted by Nott; and occasionally, from the pages of Warton, Percy, Whiter, and Gilchrist. Where references, however, are absolutely essential, they will be found in their due place.

It has been justly observed by Mr. Chalmers, that "what Augustus said of Rome, may be remarked of Elizabeth and the stage, that she found it brick, and left it marble." At her accession in 1558, no regular theatre had been established, and the players of that period, even in the capital, were compelled to have recourse to the yards of great Inns, as the most commodious places which they could obtain for the representation of their pieces. These, being surrounded by open stages and galleries, and possessing, likewise, numerous private apartments and recesses from which the genteeler part of the audience might become spectators at their ease, while the central space held a temporary stage, uncovered in fine weather, and protected by an awning in bad, were not ill calculated for the purposes of scenic exhibition, and, most undoubtedly, gave rise to the form and construction adopted in the erection of the licensed theatres.

In this stage of infancy was the public stage at the birth of Shakspeare; nor would it so rapidly have emerged into importance, had not the Queen, though occasionally yielding to the enmity and fanaticism of the Puritans with regard to this recreation, been warmly attached to theatric amusements. So early as 1569, was she frequently entertained in her own chapel-royal, by the performance of plays on profane subjects, by the children belonging to that establishment; and the year following has been fixed upon as the most probable era of the erection of a regular play-house, very appropriately named The Theatre, and supposed to have been situated in the Blackfriars.

We shall not be surprised, therefore, to find, that in 1574 a regular company of players was established by royal license, granting to James Burbage, John Perkyn, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wilson, servants of the Earl of Leicester, authority, under the privy seal, "to use, exercyse and occupie the arte and facultye of playenge commedies, tragedies, enterludes, stage-plays, and such other like as they have alreadie used and studied, or hereafter shall use and studie, as well for the recreation of our lovinge subjects as for our solace and pleasure when we shall think good to see them—throughoute our realme of England."

This may be considered then, with great probability, as the *first* general license obtained by any company of players in England; but, with the customary precaution of Elizabeth, it contains a clause, subjecting all dramatic amusements to the previous inspection of the Master of the Revels, an officer who, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, had been created to superintend a part of the duties which until then had fallen to the province of the Lord Chamberlain, and who now had the sphere of his control augmented by this prudent enactment, providing "that the saide commedies, tragedies, enterludes, and stage-playes, be by the Master of our Revels for the tyme beyng before sene and allowed."

The officers who exercised this authority, during the life of Shakspeare, were Sir Thomas Benger, Edmond Tilney, and Sir George Bucke. Sir Thomas Benger, who succeeded Sir Thomas Cawarden in 1560, lived not to see Shakspeare's entrance into the scenic world, but, dying in 1577, Tilney's appointment took place in 1579. This gentleman continued to regulate the stage for the long period of thirty-one years; he beheld the dawn and the mid-day splendour of Shakspeare's dramatic genius, and in his official capacity, he enjoyed the opportunity of licensing not less than thirty of his dramas, commencing with Henry the Sixth, and terminating with Antony and Cleopatra. On his death, in 1610, Sir George

Bucke, who had obtained a reversionary patent for the office in 1603, and had executed its duties for a twelvemonth previous to Tilney's decease, became Master of the Revels, and had the felicity of reading, and the honour of licensing, some of the last and noblest productions of our immortal poet, namely, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, the *Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night*. He also lived to deplore the premature extinction of this unrivalled bard, and he died in the year which presented to the public the first folio edition of his plays.

The erection of a theatre in 1570; the establishment by royal authority of a regular company in 1574; and the subjection of both to highly respectable officers, operated so strongly in favour of dramatic amusements, that we find Stubbes, the puritanic satirist, bitterly inveighing in 1583 against the great popular support of the theatres in his day, which he sarcastically terms "*Venus' Palaces*," and immediately afterwards designates by a general application of the names which had been given at that time to the two principal structures: "*Marke*," says he, the flocking and running to theaters and curtens, daylie and hourelly, night and daye, tyme and tyde, to see playes and enterludes."

This passion for the stage continued rapidly to increase, and before the year 1590 not less than four or five theatres were in existence. The patronage of dramatic representation made an equal progress at court; for though Elizabeth never, it is believed, attended a public theatre, yet had she four companies of children who frequently performed for her amusement, denominated the Children of St. Paul's, the Children of Westminster, the Children of the Chapel, and the Children of Windsor. The public actors too, who were sometimes, in imitation of these appellations, called the Children of the Revels, were, towards the close of Her Majesty's reign especially, in consequence of a greatly acquired superiority over their younger brethren, often called upon to act before her at the royal theatre in Whitehall. Exhibitions of this kind at court were usual at Christmas, on Twelfth Night, at Candlemas, and at Shrove-tide, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and the plays of Shakspeare were occasionally the entertainment of the night: thus we find *Love's Labour's Lost* to have been performed before our maiden Queen during the Christmas-holidays, and *King Lear* to have been exhibited before King James on St. Stephen's night.

On these occasions, the representation was generally at night that it might not interfere with the performances at the regular theatres, which took place early in the afternoon; and we learn from the Council-books, that the royal remuneration, in the age of Elizabeth, for the exhibition of a single play at Whitehall, amounted to ten pounds, of which, twenty nobles, or six pounds thirteen shillings and four-pence formed the customary fee; and three pounds, six shillings, and eight-pence the free gift or bounty. If, however, the performers were required to leave the capital for any of the royal palaces in its neighbourhood, the fee, in consequence of the public exhibition of the day being prevented, was augmented to twenty pounds.

The protection of the drama by Elizabeth and her ministers, though it did not exempt the public players, except in one instance, from the penalties of statutes against vagabonds, yet it induced, during the whole of her long reign, numerous instances of private patronage from the most opulent of her nobility and gentry, who, possessing the power of licensing their own domestics as comedians, and, consequently, of protecting them from the operation of the act of vagrancy, sheltered various companies of performers, under the denomination of their servants, or retainers,—a privilege which was taken away, by act of parliament, on the accession of James, and, as Mr. Chalmers observes, "put an end for ever to the scenic system of prior times."

To this private patronage of the latter half of the sixteenth century, we must ascribe not less than fourteen distinct companies of players, that, in succession, contributed to exhilarate the golden days of England's matchless Queen, and, in their turn, enjoyed the honour of contributing to her amusement. Of these, the

following is a chronological enumeration :—Soon after the accession of Elizabeth, appeared Lord Leicester's company, the same which, in 1574, was finally incorporated by royal license; in 1572, was formed Sir Robert Lane's company; in the same year Lord Clinton's; in 1575, companies were created by Lord Warwick and the Lord Chamberlain, the name of Shakspeare being enrolled among the servants of the latter, who, in the first year of the subsequent reign, became entitled to the appellation of His Majesty's servants; in 1576, the Earl of Sussex brought forward a theatrical body, and in 1577, Lord Howard another, neither of which, however, attained much eminence; in 1578, the Earl of Essex mustered a company of players, and in 1579, Lord Strange, and the Earl of Derby, followed his example; in 1591, the Lord Admiral produced his set of comedians; in 1592, the Earl of Hertford effected a similar arrangement; in 1593, Lord Pembroke protected an association of actors, and, at the close of Her Majesty's reign, the Earl of Worcester had in pay, also, a company of theatrical performers.

In the mean time theatres, both public and private, were greatly on the increase, and, during the period that Shakspeare immortalised the stage, not less than seven of these structures, of established notoriety, were in existence. Four of them were considered as public theatres, namely, The Globe on the Bankside, The Curtain in Shoreditch, The Red Bull in St. John's Street, and The Fortune in Whitecross Street; and three were termed private houses, one, for instance, in Blackfriars, another in Whitefriars, and The Cockpit or Phoenix, in Drury-Lane. As The Globe, however, and the theatre in Blackfriars were the property of the same set of players, only six companies of comedians were formed, or wanted, for the purposes of representation.

Beside these principal play-houses, several others, possessing a more ephemeral existence, as The Swan, The Rose, etc., sprung up and fell in succession, forming altogether such a number, as justly gave alarm and offence to the stricter clergy, and at length attracted the attention of the privy-council, who, on the 22d of June, 1600, issued an order for the reduction of the number of play-houses, limiting these buildings to two, selecting that called The Fortune for Middlesex, and fixing on The Globe for Surrey. To such a degree, however, had now arisen the attachment of the people to dramatic recreations, that notwithstanding these orders were re-issued, with still stronger injunctions, the following year, they could never be carried into any effectual execution.

Much as Elizabeth favoured the stage, it appears to have been patronised by her successor with equal, if not superior, zeal. James may be said, indeed, to have given a dignity and consequence to the profession, to which it had hitherto been a stranger, and to have introduced into the theatric world, a new and better constituted arrangement of its parts. No sooner had he ascended the throne, than three companies were formed under his auspices; the Lord Chamberlain's servants he adopted as his own; the Queen chose the Earl of Worcester's, and Prince Henry fixed upon the Earl of Nottingham's; and on the 19th of May, only twelve days after his arrival in London, he granted to his own company, being that performing at The Globe, the following license, which was first published in Rymer's "*Fœdera*," in 1705:—

PRO LAURENTIO FLETCHER ET WILLIELMO SHAKESPEARE ET ALIIS.

"A. D. 1603. Pat.

"1. Jac. P. 2. m. 4. James by the grace of God, &c. to all justices, maiors, sheriffs, constables, headboroughs, and other our officers and loving subjects, greeting. Know you that wee, of our special grace, certaine knowledge, and meer motion, have licensed and authorised, and by these presentes doe licence and authorize theise our servants, Laurence Fletcher, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, Richard Burbage, Augustine Phillippes, John Hemings, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowly, and the rest of their associates, freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing *comedies, tragedies, histories, interludes, morals, pastorals, stage-plaies*, and such like other as thei have already studied or hereafter shall use or studie, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and

pleasure when we shall thincke good to see them, during our pleasure: and the said comedies, tragedies, histories, enterludes, morales, pastorals, stage-plaies, and such like, to shew and exercise publicquely to their best commoditie, when the infection of the plague shall decrease, as well within their nowe usuall house called the *Globe*, within our county of Surrey, as also within anie towne-halls or moute-halls, or other convenient places within the liberties and freedom of any other citie, universitie, toun, or boroughe whatsoever, within our said realmes and dominions. Willing and commanding you and everie of you, as you tender our pleasure, not onelie to permit and suffer them herein, without any your letts, hindrances, or molestations, during our pleasure, but also to be aiding or assistinge to them if any wrong be to them offered, and to allow them such former curtesies as hath been given to men of their place and quallitie; and also what further favour you shall shew to these our servants for our sake, we shall take kindlie at your handes. In witness whereof, &c.

“Witness our selfe at Westminster, the nynteenth daye of Maye,

“Per Breve de privato sigillo.”

To The *Globe* mentioned in this license, and to the play-house in Blackfriars, as being the theatres exclusively belonging to Shakspeare's company, and where all his dramas were performed, we shall now confine our attention, the customs and usages of these, the one being a public, and the other a private theatre, pretty accurately applying to the rest.

The exact era of the building of The *Globe* has not been ascertained. Mr. Malone, from the documents which he consulted, conceives it to have been erected not long anterior to the year 1596; and Mr. Chalmers, resting on the evidence of Norden's map of London, concludes it to have been built before the year 1593.* Its site appears to have been on the southern side of the Thames, called the Bankside, and its form, which was of considerable size, to have been externally hexagonal, and internally circular. It was constructed of wood, and only partly thatched, its centre being open to the weather. It was probably named The *Globe*, not from the circularity of its interior, but from its sign exhibiting Hercules supporting the globe, under which was inscribed “*Totus mundus agit histrionem*”

Being a public theatre, The *Globe* was likewise distinguished by a pole erected on its roof, to which, during the hours of exhibition, a flag was attached; for, by reason of its central exposure, it necessarily became a summer theatre, its performers, the King's company, usually commencing their season here during the month of May. The exhibitions at the *Globe* were frequent, and it is said, chiefly calculated for the lower class of people, the upper ranks, and the critics, generally preferring the private theatres, which were smaller, and more conveniently fitted up. The advantages of elegance and decoration, however, were no longer wanting to The *Globe*, in 1614; for the old structure, consisting of wood and thatch, being burnt down on the 29th of June, 1613, the subsequent year saw it rise from its ashes with considerable splendour.†

The Theatre in Blackfriars may be classed among the earliest buildings of the kind, being certainly in existence before 1580. It was erected near the present site of Apothecaries' Hall, and being without the liberties of the city of London, had the good fortune to escape the levelling fury of the fanatics, who, shortly after the above period, obtained leave to destroy all the play-houses within the jurisdiction of the city.

It does not appear that Shakspeare's company, or the King's servants, had any interest in this theatre before the winter of 1604, at which period, or in the following spring, they became its purchasers; the children of the Revels, or, as they were sometimes called, the children of Blackfriars, being the usual performers at this house, prior to that event.

* See Malone's Inquiry, p. 87.; and Chalmers's Apology, p. 115.

† Of the perishable materials, and inconvenient construction of the old theatre, we have some remarkable proofs, in two letters extant, describing the accident. The first written by Sir Henry Wotton, and dated July 2, 1613, concludes by asserting that “nothing did perish but *wood* and *straw*, and a few forsaken cloaks;” and the second from Mr. John Chamberlaine to Sir Ralph Winwood, dated July 8, 1613, remarks, that “it was a great marvaile and fair grace of God that the people had so little harm, having but *two narrow doors* to get out.”—Reliquiæ Wotton, p. 425. edit. 1685; and Winwood's Memorials, vol. iii. p. 469.

The distinctions subsisting between Blackfriars and The Globe, seem to have been nothing more, than that the former being a private, and a winter, house, was smaller, more compactly put together, and, as the representations were by candle-light, better calculated for the purposes of warmth and protection. As the internal structure, however, with the exception of the open centre, was similar to that of The Globe, and as the economy and usages were, there is every reason to believe, the same, not only in both these houses, but in every other contemporary theatre, the subsequent notices may be considered as applying, where not otherwise expressed, to the general state of the Elizabethan stage, though immediately derived from the costume of The Globe.

The interior architectural arrangements of this ancient theatre have been, in their leading features, preserved to the present day. The galleries, or scaffolds, as they were sometimes called, were constructed over each other, occupying three sides of the house, and assuming, according to the plan of the building, a square or semicircular form. Beneath these were small apartments, called *rooms*, intended for the genteeler part of the audience, and answering, in almost every respect, to our modern boxes. In The Globe, these were open to all who chose to pay for them, but at Blackfriars and other private theatres, there is some reason to conclude, that they were occasionally the property of individuals, who secured their claim through the medium of a key.

It has been remarked, that the centre of The Globe, or summer theatre, was open to the weather, and, from the first temporary play-houses having been built in the area of inns or common ostleries, this was usually called The Yard. It had neither floor nor benches, and the common people standing here to see the performance, were, therefore, termed by Shakspeare groundlings; an epithet repeated by Decker, who speaks of "the groundling and gallery commoner, buying his sport by the penny." * The similar space at Blackfriars was named the Pit, but seems to have differed in no other respect than in being protected by a roof. It was separated from the stage merely by a railing of pales, for there was no intervening orchestra, the music, consisting chiefly of trumpets, cornets, hautboys, lutes, recorders, viols, and organs, being executed by a band of eight or ten performers, who were stationed in an elevated balcony nearly occupying that part of the house which is now denominated the upper stage-box.

The stage itself appears to have been divided into two parts, namely the lower and the upper stage; the former with nearly the same relative elevation with regard to the pit as in the theatres of our own times; the latter, resembling a balcony in shape, was placed towards the rear of the former, having its platform not less than eight or nine feet from the ground. This was a contrivance attended with much conveniency; here was represented the play before the King in Hamlet; here, in several of the old plays, part of the dialogue was carried on, and here, having curtains which drew in front, were occasionally concealed, from the view of the audience, persons whose seclusion might be necessary to the business of the plot.

Curtains also of woollen, or silk, were hung in the front of the greater or lower stage, not suspended, in the modern style, by lines and pullies, but opening in the middle, and sliding on an iron rod.

Beside the accommodation of boxes, pit, and galleries, in the usual parts of the house, two boxes, one on each side, were attached to the balcony or upper stage, and were termed private boxes; but, being inconveniently situated, and, as Decker remarks, "almost smothered in darkness," were seldom frequented, except from motives of eccentricity, by characters higher than waiting-women and gentlemen-ushers. † Seats also, at the private theatres, were allowed to be placed on the stage, and were generally occupied by the wits, gallants, and critics of the day; thus Decker observes,— "by sitting on the stage, you have a signed patent to

* Gull's Horn-book, Nott's reprint, p. 132.

† *Ibid.* p. 135.

engross the whole commodity of censure; may lawfully presume to be a girder, and *stand at the helm to steer the passage of scenes.*" *

The passage in *italics* which closes this quotation, would seem to be decisive of the long agitated question relative to the use of scenery; Mr. Malone asserting,—“that the stage of Shakspeare was not furnished with moveable painted scenes, but merely decorated with curtains, and arras or tapestry hangings, which, when decayed, appear to have been sometimes ornamented with pictures;” and Mr. Steevens contending, that where so much machinery as the plays of Shakspeare require, is allowed to have been employed, the less complicated adjunct of scenes could scarcely be wanting; for that where “the column is found standing, no one will suppose but that it was once accompanied by its usual entablature. — In short,” he adds, “without characteristic discriminations of place, the historical dramas of Shakspeare in particular would have been wrapped in tenfold confusion and obscurity; nor could the spectator have felt the poet’s power, or accompanied his rapid transitions from one situation to another, without such guides as painted canvas only could supply. — But for these, or such assistances, the spectator, like Hamlet’s mother, must have bent his gaze on mortifying vacancy; and with the guest invited by the Barmecide, in the Arabian tale, must have furnished from his own imagination the entertainment of which his eyes were solicited to partake.”

If the machinery accompanying trap-doors, tombs, and cauldrons, the appearance of ghosts, phantoms, and monsters, the descent of gods, the magic evanishment of articles of furniture and provision, and the confiction of the elements, were not strangers to the Shakspearean theatre, it surely would have been an easy matter to have transferred the frame-work and painted canvas which, according to Holinshed, and even preceding chroniclers, decorated the pageants and tournaments of those days, to the business of the stage. Nor can we, indeed, conceive, as Mr. Steevens has remarked, how the minute inventory of Imogen’s bedchamber, and the accurate description of the exterior of Inverness Castle, could have been rendered intelligible or endurable without such assistance.

It is highly probable, therefore, from these considerations, and from the passage in Decker, that, notwithstanding the mass of negative evidence collected by Mr. Malone, moveable painted scenes were occasionally introduced on the stage during the age of Shakspeare; and it may be further reasonably concluded, that, from the phrase of “steering the passage of scenes,” the mechanism was formed and conducted on a plan approximating that which is now familiar to a modern audience.

The conjecture of Mr. Steevens, however, that private theatres had no scenes, while the public had, owing to the former admitting part of the audience on the stage, who might interfere with the convenient shifting of such an apparatus, is annihilated by the quotation from Decker, who expressly says, that “by sitting on the stage, you have a signed patent to stand at the helm to steer the passage of the scenes,” by which it would appear, that those who obtained seats on the private stage, occasionally amused themselves by assisting the regular mechanists in the adjustment of the scenery.

We learn, also, from Heywood, that the internal roof of the stage was either painted of a sky-blue colour, or hung with drapery of a similar tint, in order to represent the heavens; and there is much reason to suppose, with a very ingenious commentator, that when the idea of a gloomy and starless night was to be impressed, these heavens were hung with black, whence, among many passages in Shakspeare illustrative of this position, the following line manifestly owes its origin:—

“Hung be the Heavens with black, yield day to night.” †

* Gull’s Horn-book, p. 138.

† Whiter’s Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare, p. 157, 158.

It has, likewise, been asserted, and, indeed, to a certain extent, proved, by the same learned writer, that the lower part of the stage was distinguished by the name of Hell; and he quotes the annexed passage from Chapman as decisive on the subject:—

“ The fortune of a *Stage* (like fortune’s self)
 Amazeth greatest judgments: and none knows
 The hidden causes of those strange effects,
 That rise from *this HELL*, or fall from *this HEAVEN*.” *

From this connection of the celestial and infernal regions with the stage, Mr. Whiter has inferred, through the medium of numerous pertinent quotations from Shakspeare and his contemporaries, that a vast mass of imagery was so blended and associated in the mind of our great poet, as to form an intimate union in his ideas between Hell and Night; the darkened Heavens and the Stage of Tragedy; and this, too, at an early period, even during the composition of his *Rape of Lucrece*, which contains some striking instances of this theatrical combination.

To these notices on the interior structure of the Shakspearean theatre, we shall now add the most material circumstances relative to its economy and usages.

The mode of announcing its exhibitions, if we except the medium of newspapers, a resource of subsequent times, seems to have been not less effectual and extensive than that of the present day. Playbills were printed, expressing the title of the piece or pieces to be performed, but containing neither the names of the characters nor of the actors; these were industriously circulated through the town and affixed to posts and public buildings, a custom which forms the subject of a repartee recorded by Taylor the water-poet, who began to write towards the close of Shakspeare’s life:—“ Master Field, the player,” he relates, “ riding up Fleet-street a great pace, a gentleman called him, and asked him, what play was played that day. He being angry to be staid on so frivolous a demand, answered, that he might see what play was plaied upon every poste. I cry you mercy, said the gentleman, I tooke you for a poste, you rode so fast.” †

In the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, the Days of Acting, at the public theatres, were chiefly confined to Sundays, Her Majesty’s license to Burbage in 1574, granting such exhibition on that day, out of the hours of prayer; and this was the day which the Queen herself usually selected for dramatic representation at court. The rapidly increasing taste, however, for theatric amusement soon induced the players to go beyond the limits of permission, and we find Gosson, in 1579, exclaiming, that the players, “because they are allowed to play every Sunday, make four or five Sundays, at least, every week.” A reformation more consonant to morality and decorum took place in the subsequent reign; for, though plays were still performed on Sundays, at the court of James the First, yet they were no longer tolerated on that day at the public theatres, permission being now given, on application to the Master of the Revels, for their performance every day, save on the Sabbath, during the winter, and with no further exception than the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent, which were at that time called sermon-days.

The Hours of Acting, during the whole period of Shakspeare’s career, continued to be early in the afternoon. In 1598, we are informed by an epigram of

* Whiter’s *Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare*, p. 178, 183; and see Prologue to *All Fools*, by Chapman, 1605. in *Old Plays*, vol. iv. p. 116.

† Taylor’s *Works*, p. 183.—Mr Malone is of opinion that to these play-bills we owe “the long and whimsical titles which are prefixed to the quarto copies of our author’s plays.—It is indeed absurd to suppose, that the modest Shakspeare, who has more than once apologized for his untutored lines, should in his manuscripts have entitled any of his dramas most excellent and pleasant performances.” Thus:—

“The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice, 1600.”

—“A most pleasant and excellent conceited Comedie of Syr John Falstaffe and the Merry Wives of Windsor, 1602.”

“The late and much admired Play, called Pericles Prince of Tyre, 1609,” &c. &c.

Sir John Davies, that one o'clock was the usual time for the commencement of the play:—

“Fuscus doth rise at ten, and at eleven
He goes to Gyls, where he doth eat till one,
Then sees a play;”

and, in 1609, when Decker published his *Gull's Horn-book*, the hour was thrown back to three, nor did it become later until towards the close of the seventeenth century. The time usually consumed in the exhibition appears, from the prologue to Henry the Eighth, to have been only two hours:—

“Those that come —
I'll undertake may see away their *shilling*
Richly in *two short hours*.”

The mention of payment in this passage, leads to the consideration of the Prices of Admission, and the sum here specified, contemporary authority informs us, was demanded for entrance into the best rooms or boxes.* Sixpence also, and sometimes a shilling, was paid for seats or stools on the stage. Sixpence was likewise the price of admission to the pit and galleries of the Globe and Blackfriars; but at inferior houses, a penny, or at most two-pence, gave access to the “groundling,” or the “gallery-commoner.” Dramatic poets, as in the present day, were admitted gratis. We may also add, that, from some verses addressed to the memory of Ben Jonson, by Jasper Mayne, and alluding to his *Volpone* or the *Fox*, acted in 1605, it is allowable to infer, that the prices of admission were, on the first representation of a new play, doubled, and even sometimes trebled.

There is every reason to suppose, that while Shakspeare wrote for the stage, the number of plays performed in one day, seldom, if ever, exceeded one tragedy, comedy, or history, and that the entertainment was varied and protracted, either by the extempore humour and tricks of the Clown after the play was over, or by singing, dancing, or ludicrous recitation, between the acts.

The house appears to have been pretty well supplied with Lights; the stage being illuminated by two large branches; the body of the house by cresset lights, formed of ropes wreathed and pitched, and placed in open iron lanterns, and these were occasionally assisted by the interspersions of wax tapers among the boxes.

The Amusements of the Audience before the Play commenced seem to have been amply supplied by themselves, the only recreation provided by the theatre, during this tedious interval, being the music of the band, which struck up thrice, playing three flourishes, or, as they were then called, three soundings, before the performance began; but these were of course short, being principally intended as announcements, similar to those which we now receive from the prompter's bell. To kill time, therefore, reading and playing cards were the resources of the genteeler part of the audience: “Before the play begins,” says Decker to his gallant, “fall to cards; you may win or lose, as fencers do in a prize, and beat one another by confederacy, yet share the money when you meet at supper: notwithstanding, to gull the ragamuffins that stand aloof gaping at you, throw the cards, having first torn four or five of them, round about the stage, just upon the third sound, as though you had lost.”†

Of the less refined amusements of these gaping ragamuffins, “the youths that thunder at a play-house, and fight for bitter apples,”‡ we find numerous traces in Decker, Jonson, and their contemporaries, which enable us to assert, that they chiefly consisted in smoking tobacco, drinking ale, cracking nuts, and eating fruit, which were regularly supplied by men attending in the theatre, and whose vociferation and clamour, or, as a writer of that time expresses it, “to be made adder-deaf with pippin-cry,” were justly considered as grievous nuisances; more especially the use of tobacco, which must have been intolerable to those unac-

* Decker's *Gull's Horn-book*, reprint, p. 18. note.

† *Gull's Horn-book*, reprint, p. 146.

‡ Henry VIII. act v. sc. 3.

customed to its odour, and, indeed, occasionally drew forth the execration of individuals: thus in a work entitled, "*Dyets Dry Dinner*," we find the author commencing an epigram on the wanton and excessive use of tobacco, in the following terms:—

" It chaunc'd me gazing at the Theater,
To spie a Dock-Tabacco-Chevalier,
Clouding the loathing ayr with foggie fume
Of Dock-Tabacco; — — — —
I wisht the Roman lawes severity:
Who smoke selleth, with smoke be done to dy." *

The most rational of the amusements which occupied the impatient audience, was certainly that of reading, and this appears to have been supplied by a custom of hawking about new publications at the theatre; at least this may be inferred from the opening of an address to the public, prefixed by William Fennor, to a production of his, entitled "*Descriptions*," and published in 1616. "To the Gentlemen readers, worthy gentlemen, of what degree soever, I suppose this pamphlet will hap into your hands, before a play begin, with the importunate clamour of "*Buy a New Booke*," by some needy companion, that will be glad to furnish you with worke for a turn'd teaster." †

As soon as the third sounding had finished, it was usual for the person whose province it was to speak the Prologue, immediately to enter. As a diffident and supplicatory manner were thought essential to this character, who is termed by Decker, "*the quaking Prologue*," it was the custom to clothe him in a long black velvet cloak, to which Shirley adds, a little beard; a starch'd face, and a supple leg.

On withdrawing the curtain, the stage was generally found strewed with rushes, which, in Shakspeare's time, as hath been already remarked formed the common covering of floors, from the palace to the cottage; but, on splendid occasions, it was matted entirely over; thus, Sir Henry Wotton, in a letter which describes the conflagration of the Globe Theatre, in 1613, says, that on the night of the accident, "*the King's Players had a new play, called "All is true," representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry the Eighth, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage.*"

The performance of tragedy appears to have been attended with some peculiar preparations; one of which was hanging the stage with black, a practice which dwelt on Shakspeare's recollection when, in writing his *Rape of Lucrece*, he speaks of

" *Black stage for tragedies, and murthers fell;*" ‡

and is put out of dispute by a passage in the Induction to an anonymous tragedy, entitled, "*A Warning for fair Women*," 1599, where History, addressing Comedy, says:—

" Look, Comedie, I mark'd it not till now,
The stage is hung with blacke, and I perceive
The auditors prepar'd for tragedie:"

to which Comedy replies:—

" Nay then, I see she shall be entertain'd;
These ornaments beseeem not thee and me."

* "*Dyets Dry Dinner*: consisting of eight several courses. 1. Fruites. 2. Hearbes. 3. Flesh. 4. Fish. 5. Whitmeats. 6. Spice. 7. Sauce. 8. Tabacco. All served in after the order of time universall. By Henry Buttes, Maister of Artes, and Fellowe of C.C.C. in C. London, 1599." Small 8vo.

† "*Fennors Descriptions*, or a true relation of certaine and divers speeches, spoken before the King and Queene's most excellent Majestie, the prince his highnesse, and the Lady Elizabeth's Grace. By William Fennor, his Majestie's Servant. London, 1616." 4to.

‡ Malone's Supplement, vol. i. p. 517.—"The hanging, however, was," remarks the editor, "I suppose, no more than one piece of black baize placed at the back of the stage, in the room of the tapestry which was the common decoration when comedies were acted."

If the decorations of the stage itself could boast but little splendour, the wardrobe, even of the Globe and Blackfriars, could not be supposed either richly or amply furnished; in fact, even Jonson, in 1625, nine years after Shakspeare's death, betrays the poverty of the stage-dresses, when he exclaims in the Induction to his "Staple of News," "O curiosity, you come to see who wears the new suit to-day; whose clothes are best pen'd, etc.—what king plays without cuffs, and his queen without gloves: who rides post in stockings, and dances in boots."* It is evident, therefore, that the dramas of our great poet could derive little attraction from magnificence of attire, though it appears, from a passage in Jonson, that not only was there a prompter, or book-holder, but likewise a property, or tire-man, belonging to each theatre, in 1601.† Periwigs, which came into fashion about 1596, were often worn on the stage by male characters, whence Hamlet is represented calling a ranting player, "a robustious periwig-pated fellow." (Act iii. sc. 2.) Masks or vizards were also sometimes used by those who personated female characters; thus Quince tells Flute, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, on his objecting to perform a woman's part, that he "shall play it in a mask." Act i. sc. 2.

Female characters, indeed, were on the old English stage, as they had been on the Grecian and Roman, always personated by men or boys, a practice which continued with us until near the period of the Restoration. Italy and France long preceded us in the introduction of women on the theatric boards; for Coryate writing from Venice in 1608, and describing one of the theatres of that city, says, "the house is very beggarly and base, in comparison of our stately play-houses in England;" and he then adds, what must give us a wretched idea of the state of the stage at that time in Italy, "neither can their actors compare with us for apparell, shewes, and musicke. Here," he continues, "I observed certaine things that I never saw before; for I saw women act, a thing that I never saw before."‡

The mode of expressing dislike of, or censuring a play, was as decided in the days of Shakspeare as in the present age, and sometimes effected by the same means. Decker gives us two methods of expressing disapprobation; one, by leaving the house with as many in your train as you can collect, the other, by staying, in order to interrupt the performance: "you shall disgrace him (the poet) worse," he observes, "than by tossing him in a blanket, or giving him the bastinado in a tavern, if, in the middle of his play, be it pastoral or comedy, moral or tragedy, you rise with a screwed and discontented face from your stool to be gone;"—and "salute all your gentle acquaintance, that are spread either on the rushes, or on stools about you:" and draw what troop you can from the stage after you:" but, "if either the company, or indisposition of the weather bind you to sit it out;—mew at passionate speeches; blare at merry; find fault with the musick; whew at the children's action; whistle at the songs;"§ modes of annoyance sufficiently provoking, and occasionally very effectual toward the final condemnation of a play, as Ben Jonson experienced in more instances than one.**

It was usual also for the critics and coxcombs of the day, either from motives of curiosity, vanity, or malevolence, to carry to the theatre table-books, made of small plates of slate bound together in duodecimo, and to take down passages from the play, for the purpose either of retailing them in taverns and parties, or with the view of ridiculing and degrading the author; "to such, wherever they sit concealed," says the indignant Jonson in 1601, "let them know, the author defies them and their writing-tables."††

An Epilogue, sometimes spoken by one of the *Dramatis Personæ*, and some—

* Whalley's Works of Ben Jonson; Prologue in Induction.

† Whalley's Jonson; Cynthia's Revels, Induction.

‡ Crudities, 4to, 1611, p. 247.

§ Gull's Horn-book, reprint, p. 147—149.

** Sejanus, Catiline, and The New Inn, were all condemned.

†† "There is reason to believe," remarks Mr. Malone, "that the imperfect and mutilated copies of one or two of Shakspeare's dramas, which are yet extant, were taken down by the ear, or in short-hand, during the exhibition."

times by an extra character, was not uncommon at this period ; and, when employed, generally terminated, if, in a public theatre, with a prayer for the king or queen ; if, in a private one, for the lord of the mansion. The prayer, however, was, almost always, a necessary form, whether an epilogue were adopted or not ; and, on these occasions, whatever may have been the nature of the preceding drama, the players, kneeling down, solemnly addressed themselves to their devotions : thus Shakspeare concludes his Epilogue to the Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, by telling his audience, “ I will bid you good night : and so kneel down before you ;—but, indeed, to pray for the queen ;” and Sir John Harrington closes his “ *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, 1596, with the following sarcastic mention of this custom as retained in private theatres :—“ But I will neither end with sermon nor prayer, lest some wags liken me to my L. () players, who, when they have ended a baudie comedy, as though that were a preparative to devotion, kneele down solemnly, and pray all the companie to pray with them for their good lord and maister.” Considering the place chosen for its display, this is, certainly, a custom

“ More honour’d in the breach, than the observance.”

With regard to the Remuneration of Actors, during the age of Shakspeare, it has been ascertained, that, after deducting forty-five shillings, which were the usual nightly, or rather daily, expenses at the Globe and Blackfriars, the net receipt never amounted to more than twenty pounds, and that the average receipt, after making a similar deduction, may be estimated at about nine pounds. This sum Mr. Malone supposes to have been in our poet’s time “ divided into forty shares, of which fifteen were appropriated to the house-keepers or proprietors, three to the purchase of copies of new plays, stage-habits, etc., and twenty-two to the actors.” He further calculates, that, as the acting season lasted forty weeks, and each company consisted of about twenty persons, six of whom probably were principal, and the other subordinate performers, if we suppose two shares to have been the reward of a principal actor ; one share that of a second class composed of six, and half a share the portion of the remaining eight, the performer who had two shares, would, on the calculation of nine pounds clear per night, receive nine shillings as his nightly dividend, and, at the rate of five plays a week, his weekly profit would amount to two pounds five shillings. “ On all these *data*, adds Mr. Malone, “ I think it may be safely concluded, that the performers of the first class did not derive from their profession more than ninety pounds a-year at the utmost. Shakspeare, Heminge, Condell, Burbage, Lowin, and Taylor had without doubt other shares as proprietors or leaseholders ; but what the different proportions were which each of them possessed in that right, it is now impossible to ascertain. If we consider, however, the value of money during the reign of Elizabeth, and the relative prices of the necessary articles of life, it will be found that these salaries were not inadequate to the purposes of comfortable subsistence.

The profits accruing to the original source of the entertainment, or, in other words, the Remuneration given to the Dramatic Poet, was certainly, if we compare the claims of genius between the two parties, on a scale inferior to that which fell to the lot of the actor.

The author had the choice of two modes in the disposal of his property ; he either sold the copy-right of his play to the theatre, or retained it in his own hands. In the former instance, which was frequently had recourse to in the age of Shakspeare, the only emolument was that derived from the purchase made by the proprietors of the theatre, who took care to secure the performance of the piece exclusively to their own company, and whose interest it was to defer its publication as long as possible ; in the latter instance, not only had the poet the right of publication and the benefit of sale in his own option, but he had likewise a claim upon the theatre for a benefit. This, towards the termination of the

sixteenth century, took place on the second day, * but was soon afterwards, as early indeed as 1612, postponed to the third day. †

From a publication of Robert Greene's, dated 1592, it appears, that the price of a drama, when disposed of to the public players, was twenty nobles, or six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence; but that private companies would sometimes give double that sum. ‡ It has been recorded, indeed, by Oldys, in one of his manuscripts, but upon what authority is not mentioned, that Shakspeare received but five pounds for his Hamlet!

What a bookseller gave for the copyright of a play at this period is unknown; but we have sufficient foundation, that of the bookseller's Preface to the quarto edition of our poet's Troilus and Cressida in 1609, for asserting, that sixpence was the sale price of a play when published. It may also be affirmed, on grounds of equal security, that forty shillings formed the customary compliment for the flattery of a dedication. §

To these notices concerning the pecuniary rewards of poets and performers, may be added the conjecture of Mr. Malone, that Shakspeare, "as author, actor, and proprietor, probably received from the theatre about two hundred pounds a year."

From this description of the architecture, economy, and usages of the Shakspearean Stage, it must be evident, how trifling were the obligations of our great poet to the adventitious aid of scenery, machinery, and decoration, notwithstanding we have admitted these to be somewhat more elaborate than is usually allowed. The Art of Acting, however, had, during the same period, made very rapid strides towards perfection, and dramatic action and expression, therefore, coadjutors of infinitely more importance than the most splendid scenical apparatus, exhibited, we have reason to believe, powers in a great degree competent to the task of doing justice to the imperishable productions of this unrivalled bard of pity and of terror.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Brief View of Dramatic Poetry, from the Birth of Shakspeare to the Period of his Commencement as a Writer for the Stage, about the Year 1590; with Critical Notices of the Dramatic Poets who flourished during that Interval.

It is remarkable that the era of the birth of Shakspeare should occur in almost intermediate contact with those periods which mark the first appearance of what may be termed legitimate tragedy and comedy. In 1561-2, was exhibited the tragedy of "Ferrex and Porrex," written by Thomas Norton, and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, "the first specimen," observes Mr. Warton, "in our lan-

* In Davenant's "Play-house to be Let," occurs the following passage:—

"There is an old tradition,
That in the times of mighty Tamberlane,
Of conjuring Faustus and the Beauchamps bold,
You poets used to have the second day."

† On the authority of Decker's Prologue to one of his comedies entitled "If this be not a good Play the Devil's in't," 1612:—

"Not caring, so he gains
A cram'd third day."

‡ "Master R. G., would it not make you blush—if you sold Orlando Furioso to the queenes players for twenty nobles, and when they were in the country, sold the same play to Lord Admirals men, for as much more?"—*Defence of Coney-catching*, 1592.

§ "I did determine not to have dedicated my play to any body, because forty shillings I care not for; and above, few or none will bestow on these matters."—*Dedication to "A Woman's a Weathercock,"* a comedy by N. Field, 1612.

guage of an heroic tale written in verse, and divided into acts and scenes, and clothed in all the formalities of a regular tragedy ;”* in 1564, as is well known, the leading object of our work, the great poet of nature, was born ; and, in 1566, was acted at Christ’s College, Cambridge, under the quaint title of “ Gammer Gurton’s Needle,” the first play, remarks Wright, “ that looks like a regular comedy.” †

Previous to the exhibition of these pieces, the public had been contented with Mysteries, Moralities, and Interludes ; the first of these, exclusively occupied by miracles and scriptural narratives, originated with the ecclesiastics so far back as the eleventh century ; the second, consisting chiefly of allegorical personification, seems to have arisen about the middle of the fifteenth century ; and the third, a species of farce, or, as Jonson defines them, something played at the intervals of festivity, became prevalent during the reign of Henry the Eighth.

The examples, however, which were now furnished by Sackville and Still, in the production of “ Gorboduc,” ‡ and “ Gammer Gurton,” were not lost upon their age ; and to the ideas of legitimate fable emanating from these sources, are also to be added those derived from the now frequent custom of acting plays in the schools and universities, in imitation of the dramas of Plautus and Terence. To these co-operating causes may be ascribed the numerous tragedies and plays which appeared between the years 1566 and 1590, principally written by men who had been educated at the universities, and who, in the serious drama, endeavoured to support the stately and declamatory style of Gorboduc.

It is to this period, also, that we must refer for the epoch of the historical drama, or, what were called, in the language of their times, Histories, a gradual improvement, it is true, on the allegorical *Dramatis Personæ* of the moralities, but which, in the interval elapsing between 1570 and 1590, received a consistency and form, a materiality and organisation, which only required the animating fire of Shakspeare’s muse to kindle into life and immortality.

For the prevalence and popularity of this species of play, anterior to the productions of our poet, we are probably indebted to the publication of “ The Mirror for Magistrates,” a poetical miscellany, of which four editions were printed between 1564 and 1590, and where the most remarkable personages in English history are brought forward relating the story of their own disasters.

Another and very popular species of dramatic composition, at this era, may be satisfactorily deduced from the strong attachment still existing for the ancient moralities, in which the most solemn and serious subjects were often blended with the lowest scenes of farce and broad humour ; for though the taste of the educated part of the public was chastened and improved by the classical tragedy of Sackville, and by the translations also of Gascoigne, who, in 1566, presented his countrymen with “ Jocasta” from Euripides, and “ The Supposes,” a regular comedy, from Ariosto, yet the lower orders still lingered for the mingled buffoonery of their old stage, and tragi-comedy became necessary to catch their applause. This apparently heterogeneous compound was long the most fascinating entertainment of the scenical world ; nor were even the wildest features of the allegorical drama unrepresented ; for the interlude and, subsequently, the masque were frequently lavish in the creation of personages equally as extravagant and grotesque as any which the fifteenth century had dared to produce.

To this enumeration of the various kinds of dramatic poetry with preceded the efforts of Shakspeare, one more, of a very singular nature, must be added, the production of Richard Tartelon, the celebrated jester and comedian, who, previous to 1589, or during the course of that year, exhibited a play in two parts, called “ The Seven Deadlie Sins.” The piece itself has perished, but the Platt, or groundwork, of the Second Part, having been preserved, we find that the pre-

* Warton’s Hist. of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 355.

† Vide *Historia Histrionica*.

‡ See *Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. both for this play and *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, as edited by Sir Walter Scott.

ceding portion had been occupied in exemplifying the sins of Pride, Gluttony, Wrath, and Avarice, while Envy, Sloth, and Lechery, were reserved for its successor. The plan which Tarleton pursued, in illustrating the effects of these sins, was by selecting scenes and passages from the plays of various authors, and combining them into a whole by the connecting medium of chorusses, interlocutors, and pantomimic show. Thus the Second Part is composed from three plays, namely, Sackville's "Gorboduc," and two, now lost, entitled "Sardanapalus and Tereus," while the moralisation and connection are introduced and supported by alternate monologues in the persons of Henry the Sixth, and Lidgate, the monk of Bury. This curious specimen of scenic exhibition may not unaptly receive the appellation of the Composite Drama.

After this short general sketch of the progress of dramatic poetry from 1564 to 1591, it will be necessary to descend to some particular criticism on the chief productions which graced the stage during this interval; an attempt which we shall conduct chronologically, under the names of their respective authors.

1. SACKVILLE, THOMAS. Though the tragedy of Sackville was exhibited before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall, on the 18th of January, 1561-2, it did not reach the press until 1565, when a spurious edition was published under the title of "The Tragedie of Gorboduc." This piracy brought forth a legitimate copy in 1571, from the press of John Daye, which was now called "The Tragedie of Ferrex and Porrex;" but the nomenclature was again altered in a third edition printed for Edward Alde, in 1590, re-assuming its first and more popular denomination of "The Tragedie of Gorboduc."

The first and third editions inform us in their title-pages, that "three acts were written by Thomas Norton, and the two last by Thomas Sackville," a co-partnership which, but for this intimation, would not have been suspected, for the whole has the appearance, both in matter and style, of having issued from one and the same pen.

If the mechanism of this play, which Warton justly calls the "first genuine English Tragedy," approximate in the minor parts of its construction to a classical type, being regularly divided into acts and scenes, with a chorus of British sages closing every act save the last, yet does it evince, in many other respects, the infancy of dramatic art in this country. Every act is preceded by an elaborate Dumb Show, allegorically depicting the business of the immediately succeeding scenes, a resource, the crude nature of which sufficiently points out the stage of poetry that gave it birth. Nor is the conduct of the fable less inconsistent with the exterior formalities of the piece, the unities of time and place being openly violated, and the chronological detail of history, or rather of the fabulous annals of the age, closely followed. The plot, too, is sterile and uninteresting, and the passions are touched with a feeble and ineffective hand.

The great merit, indeed, of *Gorboduc*, is in its style and versification, in its moral and political wisdom, qualities which recommended it to the notice and encomium of Sir Philip Sidney, who tells us, that "*Gorboduc* is full of stately speeches, and well sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach."* Declamation and morality, however, are not the essentials of tragedy; the first, indeed, is a positive fault, and the second should only be the result of the struggle and collision of the passions. We must, therefore, limit the beneficial example of Sackville to purity and perspicuity of diction, to skill in the structure of his numbers, and to truth and dignity of sentiment. If to these virtues of composition, though occasionally encumbered by a too unbending rigidity of style, his contemporaries had paid due attention, we should have escaped that torrent of tumor and bombast which, shortly afterwards, inundated the dramatic world, and which continued

* Defence of Poesie, p. 561, 562.—Vide Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*, folio, 7th edit. 1629.

to disgrace the national taste during the whole period to which this chapter is confined.

2. **EDWARDS, RICHARD.** This poet, one of the gentlemen of Queen Elizabeth's chapel, and master of the children there, was the author of two plays, under the titles of "Damon and Pithias," and "Palamon and Arcite." The former of these was acted before the Queen, at court, in 1562, and first published in 1571, by Richard Jones, who terms it "The excellent comedie of two the moste faithfullest freendes Damon and Pithias;" it is an early specimen of tragi-comedy, and written in rhyme, the inferior characters exhibiting a vein of coarse humour, and the more elevated, some touches of pathos, which the story, indeed, could scarcely fail to elicit, and some faint attempts at discrimination of character. The versification is singular, consisting generally of couplets of twelve syllables, but frequently intermixed with lines varying upwards from this number, even as far as eighteen. "Palamon and Arcite," which was considered as far surpassing his first drama, had the honour also of being performed before Elizabeth, at Christ-Church Hall, Oxford, in 1566; it is likewise termed a comedy, and is said to have gratified Her Majesty so highly, that, sending for the author, after the play was finished, she greatly commended his talents, thanked him for the entertainment which his muse had afforded her, and promised to befriend him more substantially hereafter, an intention, however, which was frustrated by the death of the poet during the course of that very year.

Edwards appears to have been very popular, and highly estimated as a writer. Puttenham has classed him with those who "deserve the highest price for comedy and interlude," and Thomas Twine calls him, in an epitaph on his death,

—— "The flowre of all our realme,
And Phoenix of our age,"

assigning him immortality expressly on account of his dramatic productions.*

3. **STILL, JOHN,** a prelate to whom is ascribed, upon pretty good foundation, the first genuine comedy in our language. He was Master of Arts of Christ's College, Cambridge, at the period of producing "Gammer Gurton's Needle," and subsequently became rector of Hadleigh, in the county of Suffolk, archdeacon of Sudbury, master of St. John's and Trinity Colleges, and lastly bishop of Bath and Wells.

"Gammer Gurton's Needle," which, as we have already remarked, had been first acted in 1566, was committed to the press in 1575, under the following title:—"A ryght pithy, pleasant, and merie Comedy, intytuled Gammer Gurton's Nedle; played on the stage not longe ago in Christes Colledge, in Cambridge. Made by Mr. S. master of art. Imprinted at London in Fleetestreat, beneth the Conduit, at the signe of S. John Evangelest, by Thomas Colwell."

The humour of this curious old drama, which is written in rhyme, is broad, familiar, and grotesque; the characters are sketched with a strong, though coarse, outline, and are to the last consistently supported. The language, and many of the incidents, are gross and indelicate; but these, and numerous allusions to obsolete customs, mark the manners of the times, when the most learned and polished of the land, the inmates of an University, could listen with delight to dialogue often tinged with the lowest filth and abuse. It must be confessed, however, that this play, with all its faults, has an interest which many of its immediate, and more pretending successors, have failed to attain. It is evidently the production of a man of talents and observation, and the second act opens with a drinking song, valuable alike for its humour, and the ease and spirit of its versification.

4. **GASCOIGNE, GEORGE.** At the very period when Still produced his comedy

* Chalmers's English Poets, vol. ii. Turberville's Poems, p. 620.

in rhyme, Gascoigne presented the public with a specimen of the same species of drama in prose. This is a translation from the Italian entitled, "The Supposes. A comedie written in the Italian tongue by Ariosto, Englished by George Gascoigne of Graies-inn, esquire, and there presented, 1566."

"The dialogue of this comedy," observes Warton, "is supported with much ease and spirit, and has often the air of a modern conversation. As Gascoigne was the first who exhibited on our stage a story from Euripides, so in this play he is the first that produced an English comedy in prose."

The translation from the "Phœnisæ of" Euripides, or, as Gascoigne termed it, "Jocasta," was acted in the refectory of Gray's Inn, in the same year with the "Supposes." It was the joint production of our poet and his friend Francis Kinwelmersh, the first and fourth acts being written by the latter bard. Jocasta is more a paraphrase than a translation, and occasionally aspires to the honours of original composition, new odes being sometimes substituted for those of the Greek chorus. The dialogue of this play is given in blank verse, forming one of the earliest specimens of this measure, and, like Gorboduc, each act is preceded by a dumb show, and closed by a long ode, in the composition of which, both Gascoigne and his coadjutor have evinced considerable lyric powers.

Shakspeare seems to have been indebted to the Supposes of Gascoigne for the name of Petruchio, in the Taming of the Shrew, and for the incident which closes the second scene of the fourth act of that play.

5. WAGER, LEWIS, the author of an Interlude, called "Mary Magdalen, Her Life and Repentance," 1567, 4to. This, like most of the interludes of the same age, required, as we are told in the title-page, only four persons for its performance. The subject, which is taken from the seventh chapter of St. Luke, had been a favourite with the writers of the ancient Mysteries, of which pieces one, written in 1512, is still preserved in the Bodleian Library.

6. WILMOT, ROBERT, a student of the Inner Temple, the publisher, and one of the writers of an old tragedy, intitled "Tancred and Gismund, or Gismonde of Salerne," the composition of not less than five Templers, and performed before Elizabeth in 1568. Each of these gentlemen, says Warton, "seems to have taken an act. At the end of the fourth is "Composuit Chr. Hatton," or Sir Christopher Hatton, undoubtedly the same that was afterwards exalted by the Queen to the office of lord keeper for his agility in dancing."

Wilmot, who is mentioned with approbation in Webbe's "Discourse of English Poetrie," corrected and improved, many years after the first composition, the united labours of himself and his brother Templers, printing them with the following title: "The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismond. Compiled by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, and by them presented before Her Majestie. Newly revived and polished according to the decorum of these daies. By R. W. London. Printed by Thomas Scarlet, and are to be solde by E. C. R. Robinson. 1592."

In a dedication to his fellow-students, the editor incidentally fixes the era of the first production of his drama:

"I am now bold to present Gismund to your sights, and unto your's only, for therefore have I conjured her by the love that hath been these twenty-four years betwixt us, that she wax not so proud of her fresh painting, to straggle in her plumes abroad, but to contain herself within the walls of your house; so am I sure she shall be safe from the tragedian tyrants of our time, who are not ashamed to affirm that there can no amorous poem favour of any sharpness of wit, unless it be seasoned with scurrilous words."

From a fragment of this play as originally written, and inserted in the *Censura Literaria*, it appears to have been composed in alternate rhyme, and, we may add, displays both simplicity in its diction, and pathos in its sentiment. An imperfect copy of Wilmot's revision, and perhaps the only one in existence, is in the Garrick Collection.

7. GARTER, THOMAS. To this person has been ascribed by Coxeter, "The

Commodity of the moste vertuous and godlye Susanna;" it was entered on the Stationers' books in 1568, and probably first performed about that period; its being in black letter, in metre, and not divided into acts, are certainly strong indications of its antiquity. It was reprinted in 4to, 1578.

8. PRESTON, THOMAS, was master of arts, and fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and afterwards doctor of laws, an master of Trinity-Hall. Taking a part in the performance of John Ritwise's Latin tragedy of "Dido," got up for the entertainment of the Queen when she visited Cambridge in 1564, Her Majesty was so delighted with the grace and spirit of his acting, that she conferred upon him a pension of twenty pounds a year, being rather more than a shilling a day; a transaction which Mr. Steevens conceives to have been ridiculed by Shakspeare in his *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, where Flute, on the absence of Bottom, exclaims, "O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a-day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a-day: and the duke had not given him sixpence a-day for playing *Pyramus*, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a-day, in *Pyramus*, or nothing." — Act iv. sc. 2.

Nor was this the only sly allusion which Preston experienced from the pen of Shakspeare. Langbaine, Theobald, and Farmer consider the following speech of Falstaff as referring to a production of this writer:—"Give me a cup of sack," says the Knight, "to make mine eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in passion, and I will do it in king Cambyses' vein."

The play satirised under the name of this monarch, is entitled, "A Lamentable Tragedy, mixed ful of pleasant Mirth, conteyning the Life of Cambises, King of Percia, from the beginning of his Kingdome unto his Death, his one good deed of execution; after that many wicked deeds, and tyrannous murders committed by and through him; and last of all, his odious Death, by God's justice appointed. Don in such order as followeth, by Thomas Preston." Imprinted at London, by Edwarde Allde. 4to. B. 1.

This curious drama, which was written and published about 1570, being in the old metre, a species of ballad stanza, the allusion in Shakspeare must have been rather to the effect, than to the form, of King Cambyses' vein, perhaps referring solely, as Dr. Farmer observes, to the following marginal direction,—“At this tale tolde, let the queen weep.”

From the Division of the Parts, as given by Mr. Beloe, this very scarce tragedy seems to have been partly allegorical, and, from the specimen produced in the *Biographia Dramatica*, to have justly merited the ridicule which it was its fate to excite.*

9. WAPUL, GEORGE, the author of a play called "Tide Tarrieth for No Man. A most pleasaunte [and merry] Comedie, ryght pithy and fulle of delighte." It was entered on the Stationers' books in October, 1576, and reprinted in 1611, 4to. B. 1. This drama appears to be irrecoverably lost, as we can find no trace of it, save the title.

10. LUPTON, THOMAS. Of this writer nothing more is known, than that he wrote one play, which is to be found in the Collection of Mr. Garrick, and under the appellation of "A Moral and Pitieful Comedie, entitled All for Money. Plainly representing the Manners of Men and Fashion of the World nowe adaies. Compiled by T. Lupton. At London, printed by Roger Warde and Richard Mundee, dwelling at Temple Barre. Anno 1578." It is written in rhyme, printed in black letter, the pages unnumbered, and the style very antique and peculiar. The characters are altogether figurative and allegorical, and form one of the most grotesque examples of *Dramatis Personæ* extant. We have "Learning with Money, Learning without Money, Money without Learning, and Neither Money nor Learning;" we have also "Mischievous Helpe, Pleasure, Prest for Pleasure, Sinne, Swift to Sinne, Damnation, Satan, Pride, and Gluttonie;" again, "Gre-

* Vide Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature*, vol. i. p. 323.

goria Graceless, William with the two Wives, St. Laurence, Mother Crooke, Judas, Dives, and Godly Admonition," etc. etc. Like many other dramatic pieces of the same age, it is evidently the offspring of the old Moralities, an attachment to which continued to linger among the lower classes for many subsequent years.

11. WHETSTONE, GEORGE. To this bard, more remarkable for his miscellaneous than his dramatic poetry, we are indebted for one play, viz. "The right excellent and famous Historie of Promos and Cassandra. Devided into two Commicall Discoures." 4to. B. l. 1578.

An extrinsic importance affixing itself to this production, in consequence of its having furnished Shakspeare with several hints for his Measure for Measure, has occasioned its re-publication.* "The curious reader," remarks Mr. Steevens, "will find that this old play exhibits an almost complete embryo of Measure for Measure; yet the hints on which it is formed are so slight, that it is nearly as impossible to detect them, as it is to point out in the acorn the future ramifications of the oak."

The fable of Promos and Cassandra furnishes little interest, in the hands of Whetstone; nor are the diction and versification such as can claim even the award of mediocrity. It is chiefly written in alternate rhyme, with no pathos in its serious, and with feeble efforts at humour in its comic, parts.

12. WOOD, NATHANIEL, a clergyman of the city of Norwich, and only known as the producer of "An excellent New Comedie, entitled, The Conflict of Conscience, contayninge a most lamentable example of the doleful desperation of a miserable wordlinge, termed by the name of Philologus, who forsooke the trueth of God's Gospel for feare of the losse of life and worldly goods." 4to, 1581. This is another of the numerous spawn which issued from the ancient Mysteries and Moralities; the Dramatis Personæ, consisting of a strange medley of personified vices and real characters, are divided into six parts, "most convenient," says the author, "for such as be disposed either to shew this Comedie in private houses or otherwise." It is in the Garrick Collection, and very rare.

13. PEELE, GEORGE, the first of a train of play-wrights, who made a conspicuous figure just previous to the commencement, and during the earlier years, of Shakspeare's dramatic career. Educated at the University of Oxford, where he took his degree of Master of Arts in 1579, Peele shortly afterwards removed to London, and became the city poet, and a conductor of the pageants. His dramatic talents, like those which he exhibited in miscellaneous poetry, have been rated too high; the latter, notwithstanding Nash terms him "the chief supporter of pleasance, the atlas of poetrie, and *primus verborum artifex*," with the exception of two or three pastoral pieces, seldom attain mediocrity; and the former, though Wood has told us that "his plays were not only often acted with great applause in his life-time, but did also endure reading, with due commendation, many years after his death," are now, and perhaps not undeservedly, held in little estimation. The piece which entitles him to notice in this chapter was printed in 1584, under the appellation of The Arraignment of Paris; it is a pastoral drama, which was performed before the Queen, by the children of her chapel, and has had the honour of being attributed, though without any foundation, to the muse of Shakspeare. Peele, who is supposed to have died about 1597, produced four additional plays, namely. "Edward the First," 4to, 1593; "The Old Wive's Tale," 4to, 1595; "King David and Fair Bethsabe," published after his death in 1599, and "The Turkish Mahomet and Hyron the Fair Greek," which was never printed, and is now lost. From this unpublished play Shakspeare has taken a passage which he puts into the mouth of Pistol, who, in reference to Doll Tearsheet, calls out, Have we not Hiren here? a quotation which is to be detected in several other plays, Hiren, as we find, from one of our author's

* Among "Six Old Plays, on which Shakspeare founded his Measure for Measure, Comedy of Errors," &c. &c.; reprinted from the original editions, 2 vols. 8vo. 1779.

tracts, named "The Merie Conceited Jests of George Peele," being synonymous with the word courtezan. These allusions, however, mark the popularity of the piece, and his contemporary Robert Greene classes him with Marlowe and Lodge, "no less deserving," he remarks, "in some things rarer, in nothing inferior." From the specimens, however, which we possess of his dramatic genius, the opinion of Greene will not readily meet with a modern assent; the pastoral and descriptive parts of his plays are the best, which are often clothed in sweet and flowing verse; but, as dramas, they are nerveless, passionless, and therefore ineffective in point of character.

14. LILLY, JOHN. This once courtly author, whom we have had occasion to censure for his affected innovation, and stilted elegance in prose composition, was, says Phillips, "a writer of several old-fashioned Comedies and Tragedies, which have been printed together in a volume, and might perhaps, when time was, be in very good request."

The dramas here alluded to, but of which Phillips has given a defective and incorrect enumeration, are—

1. Alexander and Campaspe, 1584, 4to. Tragi-comedy.—2. Sappho and Phaon, 1584, 4to. Comedy.—3. Endimion, 1591, 4to. Comedy.—4. Galatea, 1592, 4to. Comedy.—5. Mydas, 1592, 4to. Comedy.—6. Mother Bombie, 1594, 4to. Comedy.—7. The Woman in the Moon, 1597, 4to. Comedy.—8. The Maid her Metamorphosis, 1600.—9. Love his Metamorphosis, 1601, 4to. Pastoral.

The volume mentioned by Phillips was published by Edward Blount in 1632, containing six of these pieces, to which he has affixed the title of "Sixe Court Comedies."

Notwithstanding the encomia of Mr. Blount, the genius of this "insufferable Elizabethan coxcomb," as he has been not unaptly called, was by no means calculated for dramatic effect. Epigrammatic wit, forced conceits, and pedantic allusion, are such bad substitutes for character and humour, that we cannot wonder if fatigue or insipidity should be the result of their employment. Campaspe has little interest, and no unity in its fable, and though termed a tragi-comedy, is written in prose; Sappho and Phaon has some beautiful passages, but is generally quaint and unnatural; Endimion has scarcely any thing to recommend it; and disgusts by its gross and fulsome flattery of Elizabeth; Galatea displays some luxuriant imagery, and Phillida and Galatea are not bad copies from the Iphis and Ianthe of Ovid; Mydas is partly a political production, and though void of interest, has more simplicity and purity both of thought and diction than is usual with this writer; Mother Bombie is altogether worthless in a dramatic light; The Woman in the Moon is little better; The Maid her Metamorphosis, the greater part of which is in verse, is one of the author's experiments for the refinement of our language,—an attempt which, if any where more peculiarly absurd, must be pronounced to be so on the stage; Love his Metamormophosis, of which the very title-page pronounces its condemnation, being designated as "A Wittie and Courtly Pastoral."*

Though only two or three of Lilly's earlier dramas fall within the period allotted to this chapter, yet, in order to prevent a tiresome repetition of the subject, we have here enumerated the whole of his comedies; a plan that we shall pursue with regard to the remaining poets of this era.

It may be necessary to remark, that we must not estimate the poetical talents of Lilly from his failure as a dramatist; for in the Lyric department he has shown very superior abilities, whether we consider the freedom and melody of his versification, or the fancy and sentiment which he displays. His plays abound with songs alike admirable for their beauty, sweetness, and polish.†

* For these plays, the reader may consult Dodsley's *Old Plays*, 1780; Hawkins's *Origin of the English Drama*; *Ancient British Drama* apud Sir Walter Scott; and *old Plays*, vols. 1 and 2. 8vo. 1814.

† Numerous specimens of these Songs, in case the dramas are not at hand, will be found in Ellis's

Lilly, who had received an excellent classical education, and was a member of both the Universities, died about the year 1600. 1606

15. HUGHES, THOMAS, the author of a singular old play, entitled "The Misfortunes of Arthur (Uther Pendragon's sonne) reduced into tragical notes by Thomas Hughes, one of the Societie of Graye's Inne." 12mo, 1587.

In conformity with some prior examples, this production has an argument, a dumb show, and a chorus to each act; "it is beautifully printed in the black letter," observes the editor of the *Biographia Dramatica*, "and has many cancels consisting of single words, half lines, and entire speeches; these were reprinted and pasted over the cancelled passages; a practice, I believe, very rarely seen." Arthur was performed before the Queen at Greenwich, on the 28th of February, and in the thirtieth year of her reign, and exhibits in its title-page a remarkable proof of the license which actors at that time took in curtailing or enlarging the composition of the original author, informing us that the play "was set downe as it passed from under his (the poet's) hands, and as it was presented, excepting certain words and lines, where some of the actors either helped their memories by brief omission, or fitted their acting by alteration." The writer appears to have been familiar with the Roman classics, but the rarity of his piece is much greater than its merit.*

16. KYD, THOMAS, to whom has been ascribed four plays, viz. "Jeronimo;" "The Spanish Tragedy;" *Solyman and Perseda*," and "Cornelia." Of these the first, which appeared on the stage about the year 1588, seems to have been given to Kyd, in consequence of his resuming the name and story in his Spanish tragedy; it is a short piece not divided into acts and scenes, of little value, and was printed in 1605, under the title of "The First Part of Jeronimo. With the Warres of Portugal, and the Life and Death of Don Andrea." 4to.

"The Spanish Tragedy, or, Hieronimo is mad again, Containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Belimperia. With the pitifull Death of Hieronimo," is supposed to have been first acted in 1588, or 1589, immediately following up the elder Jeronimo which had been well received.

Though this drama was an incessant object of ridicule to the contemporaries and immediate successors of its author, it nevertheless acquired great popularity, and long maintained possession of the stage. The consequence of this partiality was shown in a perversion of the public taste, for nothing can exceed the bombast and puerilities of this play and of those to which it gave almost instant birth. Kyd, in fact, whilst aspiring to the delineation of the most tremendous incidents, and the most uncontrolled passions, seems totally unconscious of his own imbecility; and the result, therefore, has usually been, either unqualified horror, unmitigated disgust, or the most ludicrous emotion. There is neither symmetry, consistency, nor humanity in the characters; they are beings not of this world, and the finest parts of the play, which occur in the fourth act, possess a tone of sorrow altogether wild and preternatural. The catastrophe is absurdly horrible.

Such were the attractions, however, of this sanguinary tragedy, that Ben Jonson, who, according to Decker, originally performed the character of Jeronimo, was employed by Mr. Henslow, in 1602, to give it a fresh claim on curiosity by his additions.

"The Tragedie of Solyman and Perseda, wherein is laide open Love's Constancy, Fortune's Inconstancy, and Death's Triumphs," is conjectured by Mr. Hawkins to have been the production of Kyd. Like *Jeronimo*, it is not divided into acts, and was entered on the Stationers' books in the same year with the Spanish Tragedy, a circumstance which leads us to suppose, that its date of performance was nearly contemporary with that production. Its style and manner,

Specimens of the Early English Poets, vol. ii; and in Beloe's *Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce Books*, vol. ii.

* See a further account of this play, and a specimen of the chorus, in Beloe's *Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 386.

of colouring, nor is it deficient in his wonted accumulation of horrors. It possesses, however, a few good scenes, and may be classed midway between the author's worst and best productions.

6. "The Rich Jew of Malta," 4to. The prejudice against the Jews, during the reign of Elizabeth, was excessive; none were suffered to reside in the kingdom, and every art encouraged that could stimulate the hatred of the people against this persecuted race. No engine was better calculated for this purpose than the stage, and no characters were ever more relished, or more malignantly enjoyed, than the Barabas of Marlowe, and the Shylock of Shakspeare. The distance, however, between them, as well with regard to truth of delineation as to poetical vigour of conception, is infinite; for whilst the Jew of Marlowe can be considered in no other light than as the mere incarnation of a fiend, that of Shakspeare possesses, with all his ferocity and cruelty, such a touch of humanity as classes him distinctly with his species, and renders him, if not a very probable, yet a very possible being.

7. "The Tragical Historie of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus." 4to. This, in point of preternatural wildness, and metaphysical horror, is the chef-d'œuvre of Marlowe. It unfolds not only genius of a sublimated and exotic cast, but seems to have been the product of a mind inflamed by unhallowed curiosity, and an eager irreligious desire of invading the secrets of another world, and so far gives credence to the imputations which have stained the memory of its author; for this play breathes not a poetic preternaturalism, if we may use the expression, but looks like the creature of an atmosphere emerging from the gulph of lawless spirits, and vainly employed in pursuing the corruscations which traverse its illimitable gloom.

The catastrophe of this play makes the heart shudder, and the hair involuntarily start erect; and the agonies of Faustus on the fast-approaching expiration of his compact with the Devil, are depicted with a strength truly appalling.

Yet amidst all this diabolism, there occasionally occur passages of great moral sublimity, passages on which Milton seems to have fixed his eye. Thus, the reply of the Demon Mephostophilis to the enquiry of Faustus, concerning the locality of Hell, bears a striking analogy to the descriptions of Satan's internal and ever-present torments at the commencement of the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*. "Tell me," exclaims the daring necromancer, "where is the place that men call Hell?"

"*Mephostophilis.* Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place; but *where we are is hell,*
And where hell is, there we must ever be,
And to be short, when all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be hell that are not heaven."

8. "The Tragedie of Dido, Queene of Carthage."—This drama was written in conjunction with Thomas Nash, and printed in 1594.*

Marlowe has been lavishly panegyrised by Jonson, Heywood, Drayton, Peele, Meres, Nash, etc.; but by none so emphatically as by Phillips, who, at the very opening of his article on this poet, calls him "a kind of a second Shakspeare." This seems, however, to have been done rather with a reference to the similarities arising from his having, like Shakspeare, been actor, player, and author of a poem on a congenial subject with *Venus and Adonis*, namely, his *Hero and Leander*, than from any approximation in the value of their dramatic works.

The death of Marlowe, which took place before the year 1593, was violent and premature, the melancholy termination of a life rendered still more melancholy by vice and infidelity.†

* This rare play was purchased, at the Roxburghe sale, for *seventeen guineas*!

† Two accounts, varying materially, have been given by Wood and Vaughan, of this poet's untimely

18. LODGE, THOMAS. Two dramatic pieces have issued from the pen of this elegant miscellaneous poet. Of these the first was written in conjunction with Robert Greene, and entitled "A Looking-Glass for London and England," a tragic-comedy, acted in 1591, though not published until 1598. The second is called "The Wounds of Civil War. Lively set forth in the true tragedies of Marius and Scilla," and probably performed in the year following the representation of the former play. It was printed in 1594. These dramas, though not the best of Dr. Lodge's productions, were not unpopular, nor deemed unworthy of his talents; the Looking-Glass appears to have been acted four times at the Rose theatre, in about the space of fifteen months.

19. GREENE, ROBERT. This pleasing, but unfortunate poet, was the author of six plays, independent of that which he wrote as the coadjutor of Lodge. 1. "The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay." 4to. As Greene died in September, 1592, there can be no doubt that all his dramas were written, if not all performed, before Shakspeare's commencement as a writer for the stage; we find, from Henslowe's List, that Frier Bacon was performed at the Rose theatre, in February, 1591, and repeated thrice in the course of the season; it was printed in 1594, and being founded on a popular story, had considerable success. 2. "The Historie of Orlando Furioso, one of the twelve Peers of France." This piece was likewise performed at the same theatre, in February, 1591, and also printed in 1594; the fable is taken, with little or no alteration, from the Orlando of Ariosto. 3. "The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth, slaine at Flodden. Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie presented by Oboram King of the Fayeries." Greene, says Oldys, in plotting plays, was his craft's master, and it would be curious and interesting to ascertain how he has conducted a subject which has obtained so much celebrity in our own days, and more especially in what manner he has combined it with the romantic superstition attendant on Oberon and his fairies. 4. "The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Arragon." 5. "The History of Jobe." This play, which was never printed, and it is supposed never performed, although it was entered on the Stationers' books, in 1594, was unfortunately, with many others, destroyed by the carelessness of Dr. Warburton's servant. 6. "Fair Emm, the Miller's Daughter of Manchester, with the Love of William the Conqueror," a comedy which has been ascribed to Greene, by Phillips and Winstanley; the former, after enumerating some pieces which upon no good grounds had been attributed to the joint pens of our author and Dr. Lodge, adds, "besides which, he wrote alone the comedies of Friar Bacon and Fair Emme."* It is the more probable that this drama was the composition of Greene, as it was represented at the same theatre and by the same company which brought forward his avowed productions.

We must, with Ritson, express our regret, that the dramatic works of Greene have not hitherto been collected and published together.

20. LEGGE, THOMAS, twice vice-chancellor of Cambridge, and the author of two plays which, though never printed, were acted with great applause, not only in the University which gave them birth, but on the public theatres. The first of these is named "The Destruction of Jerusalem," and appears from Henslowe's List to have been performed at the Rose theatre, on the 22d of March, 1591; the second is entitled, "The Life of King Richard the Third," a subject which

fate. That by Vaughan, as being little known, and apparently founded on the writer's own knowledge of the fact, I shall venture to transcribe. The *Golden Grove*, from which it is extracted, was first published in 1600. Relating God's judgments on Atheists, he adds:—"Not inferiour to these was one Christopher Marlowe, by profession a play-maker, who, as it is reported, about fourteen yeres a-goe, wrote a booke against the Trinitie: but see the effects of God's justice; it so hapned, that at Detford, a litle village, about three miles distant from London, as he meant to stab with his poynard one named Ingram, that had invited him thither to a feaste, and was then playing at tables; hee perceyving it, so avoyded the thrust, that withall drawing out his dagger for his defence, he stab'd this Marlowe into the eye, in such sort, that his braynes comming out at the dagger's point, hee shortly after dyed."

* *Theatrum Poetarum* apud Brydges, p. 193.

induces us to regret, that it should not have been submitted to the press, especially when the character of Legge for dramatic talent is considered; for Meres informs us in 1598, that "Doctor Leg of Cambridge" was esteemed among the "best for tragedie," adding, that "as M. Anneus Lucanus writ two excellent tragedies, one called Medea, the other de Incendio Troiæ cum Priami calamitate: so Doctor Leg hath penned two famous tragedies, the one of Richard the 3, the other of the destruction of Jerusalem." * The death of Dr. Legge took place in July, 1607.

To this catalogue of dramatic writers who preceded Shakspeare, it will be necessary to annex the names, at least, of those anonymous plays which, as far as any record of their performance has reached us, were the property of the stage anterior to the year 1594, under the almost certain presumption, that they must have been written before Shakspeare had acquired any celebrity as a theatrical poet.

These, with the exception of the plays ascribed to Shakspeare, a few Interludes and Moralities, the tragi-comedy of "Appius and Virginia," printed in 1576, and the tragedy of "Selimus, Emperor of the Turks," must, and perhaps without danger of any very important omission, be limited to the following enumeration of dramas performed at the Rose theatre during the years 1591, 1592, and 1593; from which, however, we have withdrawn all those pieces that may be found previously noticed under the names of their respective authors:—

1. Muly Mulocco, or the Battle of Alcazar, * †.	1591	15. Julian of Brentford, .	1592
2. Spanish Comedy of Don Horatio,	—	16. The Comedy of Cosmo,	—
3. Sir John Mandeville,	—	17. God Speed the Plough,	1593
4. Henry of Cornwall, .	—	18. Huon of Bourdeaux, .	—
5. Chloris and Orgasto, ‡	—	19. George a Green, **	—
6. Pope Joan, .	—	20. Buckingham, .	—
7. Machiavel, .	—	21. Richard the Confessor,	—
8. Ricardo, §	—	22. William the Conqueror,	—
9. Four Plays in One, .	—	23. Friar Francis, .	—
10. Zenobia, .	—	24. The Pinner of Wakefield, ††	—
11. Constantine, .	—	25. Abraham and Lot, .	—
12. Brandymer, .	—	26. The Fair Maid of Italy, .	—
13. Titus Vespasian, .	—	27. King Lud, .	—
14. The Tanner of Denmark, .	1592	28. The Ranger's Comedy, ‡‡	—

In order accurately to ascertain how far Shakspeare might be indebted to his predecessors, it would be highly desirable to possess a printed collection of all the dramas which are yet within the reach of the press, from the days of Sackville to the year 1591. Such a work, so far from diminishing the claim to originality with which this great poet is now invested, would, we are convinced, place it in a still more indisputable point of view; and merely prove, that, without any servility of imitation, or even the smallest dereliction of his native talent and creative genius, he had absorbed within his own refulgent sphere, the few feeble lights which, previous to his appearance, had shed a kind of twilight over the dramatic world.

The models, indeed, if such they may be called, which were presented to his

* Censura Literaria, vol. ix. p. 98.

† This play was printed in 1594, and has fallen under the ridicule of Shakspeare, in a parody on the words, *Feed and be fat*, &c.

‡ The miserable orthography of this catalogue has frequently disguised the real titles so much as to render them almost unintelligible, and I suspect *Orgasto* in this place to be very remote from the genuine word.

§ Called in one part of the list, "Bendo and Ricardo," and in another, "Byndo and Ricardo."

** This, being the prior part of the title of the Pinner of Wakefield, mentioned below, is probably one and the same with that production.

†† The Pinner of Wakefield, which is in Dodsley's Collection, and in Scott's Ancient British Drama, was printed in 1599.

‡‡ Mr. Malone observes of the play in this catalogue, called "Richard the Confessor," that it "should seem to have been written by the Tinker, in *Taming of the Shrew*, who talks of *Richard Conqueror*."

view, are, as far as we are acquainted with them, so grossly defective in structure, style, and sentiment, that, if we set aside two or three examples, little or nothing could be learned from them. In the course of near thirty years which elapsed between Sackville and Shakspeare, the best and purest period was perhaps that which immediately succeeded the exhibition of Gorboduc, but which was speedily terminated by the appearance of Preston's *Cambyzes* in, or probably rather before the year 1570. From this era we behold a succession of playwrights who, for better than twenty years, deluged the stage as tragic poets with a torrent of bombastic and sanguinary fiction, alike disgraceful to the feelings of humanity and common sense; or, as comic writers, overwhelmed us with a mass of quaintness, buffoonery, and affectation. The worthy disciples of the author of *Cambyzes*, Whetstone, Peele, Lilly, Kydd, and Marlowe, seem to have racked their brains to produce what was unnatural and atrocious, and having, like their leader, received a classical education, misemployed it to clothe their conceptions in a scholastic, uniform, and monotonous garb, as far, at least, as a versification modulated with the most undeviating regularity, and destitute of all variety of cadence or of pause, could minister to such an effect.

That so dark a picture should occasionally be relieved by gleams of light, which appear the more brilliant from the surrounding contrast, was naturally to be expected; and we have accordingly seen that the very poets who may justly be censured for their general mode of execution, for the wildness and extravagancy of their plots, now and then present us with lines, passages, and even scenes, remarkable for their beauty, strength, or poetical diction; but these, so unconnected are they, and apart from the customary tone and keeping of the pieces in which they are scattered, appear rather as the fortuitous irradiation of a meteor, whose momentary splendour serves but to render the returning gloom more heavy and oppressive, than the effect of that sober, steady, and improving light which might cheer us with the prospect of approaching day.

Of the twenty poets who have just passed in review before us, Marlowe certainly exhibits the greatest portion of genius, though debased with a large admixture of the gross and glaring faults of his contemporaries. Two of his productions may yet be read with interest; his "*Edward the Second*," and his "*Faustus*;" though the latter must be allowed to deviate from the true tract of tragedy, in presenting us rather with what is horrible than terrible in its incidents and catastrophe.

We must not be surprised, therefore, that the dramatic fabrics of these rude artists should have met with the warmest admiration, when we recollect, that in the infancy of an art, novelty is of itself abundantly productive of attraction, and that taste, neither formed by good models, nor rendered fastidious by choice, can have little power to check the march of misguided enthusiasm.

It is necessary, however, to record an event in dramatic history, which, coming into operation just previous to the entrance of our poet into the theatric arena as an author, no doubt contributed powerfully not only to chasten his muse, but, through him, universally the national taste. In 1589, commissioners were appointed by the Queen for the purpose of reviewing and revising the productions of all writers for the stage, with full powers to reject and strike out all which they might deem unmannerly, licentious, and irreverent; a censure which, it is evident, if properly and temperately executed, could not fail of conferring almost incalculable benefit on a department of literature at that time not much advanced in its career, and but too apt to transgress the limits of a just decorum.

This regulation ushers in, indeed, by many degrees the most important period in the annals of our theatre, when Shakspeare, starting into dramatic life, came boldly forward on the eye, leaving at an immeasurable distance behind him, and in groups more or less darkly shaded, his immediate predecessors, and his earliest contemporaries in the art.

CHAPTER IX.

Period of Shakspeare's Commencement as a Dramatic Poet—Chronological Arrangement of his genuine Plays—Observations on *Pericles*; on the *Comedy of Errors*; on *Love's Labour's Lost*; on *Henry the Sixth, Part the First*; on *Henry the Sixth, Part the Second*; and on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—Dissertation on the Fairy Mythology, and on the Modifications which it received from the Genius of Shakspeare.

We have, in a former portion of this work (Part II. ch. 1), assigned our reasons for concluding that, on Shakspeare's arrival in London, about the year 1586 or 1587, his immediate employment was that of an actor; and we now proceed to consider the much agitated question as to the era of his first attempts in dramatic poetry. That this was subsequent to the production of his *Venus and Adonis*, we possess his own authority, when he informs us that the poem just mentioned was "the first heir of his invention;" and though we enjoy no testimony of a like kind, or emanating from a similar source, as to the period of his earliest effort in dramatic literature, yet, if we be correct in referring the composition of his *Venus and Adonis* to the interval elapsing between the years 1587 and 1590 (Part II. ch. 2), the epoch of his first play cannot, with any probability, be placed either much anterior or subsequent to the year 1590. That it occurred not before this date, may be presumed from recollecting, that, in the first place, the prosecution of his amatory poem and the acquirement of his profession as an actor, might be sufficient to occupy an interval of two years; and, in the second place, that no contemporary previous to 1592, neither Webbe in 1586 in his *Discourse on English Poetry*, nor Puttenham in 1589, in his *Art of English Poesy*, nor Harrington in February, 1591, in his *Apology for Poetry*, has noticed or even alluded to any theatrical production of our author.

That it took place, either in 1590, or very soon after that year, must be inferred both from tradition and from written testimony. Aubrey tells us, from the former source, that "he began early to make essays in dramatique poetry, which at that time was very lowe, and his plays took well;" and from the nature and extent of the allusions in the following passage from Robert Greene's "*Groatsworth of Witte bought with a Million of Repentance*," there can be no doubt that, not only one play, but that several had been written and prepared for the stage by our poet, anterior to September, 1592.

It appears that this tract of Greene's was completed a very short time previous to his death, which happened on the third of the month of the year just mentioned, and that Henry Chettle, "upon whose perill" it had been entered in the Stationers' register on September the 20th, 1592, became editor and publisher of it before the ensuing December.

Greene had been the intimate associate of Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele, and he concludes his *Groatsworth of Witte* with an address to these bards, the object of which is, to dissuade them from any further reliance on the stage for support, and to warn them against the ingratitude and selfishness of players: "trust them not;" he exclaims, "for there is an upstart crowe beautified with our feathers, that with his tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes hee is as well able to bombaste out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes fac-totum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a countrey."

To Mr. Tyrwhit we are indebted for the first application of this passage to Shakspeare, who, as might naturally be expected, feeling himself hurt at Greene's unmerited sarcasm, clearly pointing to him by the designation of the only Shake-scene in a country, and not well pleased with Chettle's officious

publication of it, expressed his sentiments so openly as to draw forth from the repentant editor, about three months after his edition of the *Groatsworth of Witte*, an apology, which adds further weight to the inferences which we wish to deduce from the language of Greene. In this interesting little pamphlet which, under the title of "*Kind Harts Dreame*," we have had occasion to quote more at large in an earlier part of the volume (Part II. ch. 1), the author, after slightly noticing Marlowe, one of the offended parties, and speaking highly of the demeanour, professional ability, and moral integrity of Shakspeare, closes the sentence and the eulogium by mentioning "his facetious grace of writing, that approves his art."

From these passages in Greene and Chettle, combined with the traditionary relation of Aubrey, we may legitimately infer, first, that he had written for the stage before the year 1592; secondly, that he had written during this period with considerable success, for Aubrey tells us, that "his plays took well," and Chettle that his "grace in writing approved his art," thirdly, that he had written both tragedy and comedy, Greene reporting, that he was "well able to bombast out a blank verse," and Chettle speaking of his "facetious grace in writing;" fourthly, that he had altered and brought on the stage some of the separate or joint productions of Marlowe, Greene, Lodge, and Peele; the words of Greene, where he terms Shakspeare a "crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes," etc. implying, not only that he had furtively acquired fame by appropriating their productions, but referring to a particular play, through the medium of quotation, as a proof of the assertion, the words "tygres heart wrapt in a player's hide" being a parody of a line in the Third Part of King Henry the Sixth: or what we, for reasons which will be speedily assigned, have thought proper to call the Second Part,—

"O, tiger's heart, wrapp'd in a woman's hide;"

Act i. sc. 4.

fifthly, that he had already excited, as the usual consequence of success, no small degree of jealousy and envy; hence Greene has querulously bestowed upon him the appellation of "upstart," and has taxed him with a monopolising spirit, an accusation which leads us to believe, sixthly, that he had written or prepared for the stage several plays anterior to September, 1592; this last inference, which we conceive to be fairly deduced from the description of our poet as AN ABSOLUTE JOHANNES FAC-TOTUM with regard to the stage, will immediately bring forward again the question as to the precise era of our author's earliest drama.

Now to warrant the charge implied by the expression, "an absolute fac-totum," we must necessarily allow a sufficient lapse of time before September, 1592, in order to admit, not only of Shakspeare's altering a play for the stage, but of his composing either altogether, or in part, both tragedy and comedy on a basis of his own choice, so that he might, as he actually did, appear to Greene, in the capacities of corrector, improver, and original writer of plays, to be a perfect fac-totum.

And, if we further reflect, that the composition of the "*Groatsworth of Witte*" most probably, from indisposition, occupied its author one month, as he complains of "weakness scarce suffering him to write" towards the conclusion of his tract, and that we cannot reasonably conclude less than two years to have been employed by Shakspeare in the execution of the functions assigned him by Greene; the period for the production of his first drama will necessarily be thrown back to the August of the year 1590; an era to which no objection, from contradictory testimony, can with any show of probability apply; for, though Harrington, whose "*Apologie for Poetrie*" was entered on the Stationers' books in February, 1591, has not noticed Shakspeare, yet, if we consider that this treatise was, in all likelihood, completed previous to the close of 1590, we shall not wonder that a play, performed but three or four months before the critic finished his labours, unap-

propriated too, there is reason to think, by the public at that time, and-unacknowledged by the author, should be passed over in silence.

Having thus endeavoured to fix the era of our poet's commencement as a dramatic writer, it remains to ascertain which was the first drama that, either wholly or in great part, issued from his pen; a subject, like the former, certainly surrounded with many difficulties, liable to many errors, and only to be illustrated by a patient investigation of, and a well-weighed deduction from, minute circumstances and conflicting probabilities.

The reasons which have induced us to fix upon *PERICLES*, as the result of a laborious, if not a successful, enquiry, will be offered, with much diffidence, under the first article of the following Chronological Arrangement, which, though deviating, in several instances, from the chronologies of both Chalmers and Malone, will not, it is hoped, on that account be found needlessly singular, nor unproductive of a closer approximation to probability, and, perchance, to truth.

For the sake of perspicuity, it has been thought eligible to prefix, in a tabular form, the order which has been adopted, the observations confirmatory of its arrangement being classed according to the series thus drawn out; and here it may be necessary to premise, that the substance of our commentary, with the exception of what may be requisite to establish a few new dates, will be chiefly confined to critical remarks on each play, relieved by intervening dissertations on the superhuman agency of the poet.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

1. <i>Pericles</i> ,	1590.	19. <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	1599.
2. <i>Comedy of Errors</i> ,	1591.	20. <i>As You Like It</i> ,	1600.
3. <i>Love's Labours Lost</i> ,	1591.	21. <i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> ,	1601.
4. <i>King Henry the Sixth, Part I.</i>	1592.	22. <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> ,	1601.
5. <i>King Henry the Sixth, Part II.</i>	1592.	23. <i>King Henry the Eighth</i> ,	1602.
6. <i>Midsummer-Night's Dream</i> ,	1593.	24. <i>Timon of Athens</i> ,	1602.
7. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ,	1593.	25. <i>Measure for Measure</i> ,	1603.
8. <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> ,	1594.	26. <i>King Lear</i> ,	1604.
9. <i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> ,	1595.	27. <i>Cymbeline</i> ,	1605.
10. <i>King Richard the Third</i> ,	1595.	28. <i>Macbeth</i> ,	1606.
11. <i>King Richard the Second</i> ,	1596.	29. <i>Julius Cæsar</i> ,	1607.
12. <i>King Henry the Fourth, Part I.</i>	1596.	30. <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> ,	1608.
13. <i>King Henry the Fourth, Part II.</i>	1596.	31. <i>Coriolanus</i> ,	1609.
14. <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> ,	1597.	32. <i>The Winter's Tale</i> ,	1610.
15. <i>Hamlet</i> ,	1597.	33. <i>The Tempest</i> ,	1611.
16. <i>King John</i> ,	1598.	34. <i>Othello</i> ,	1612.
17. <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	1598.	35. <i>Twelfth Night</i> ,	1613.
18. <i>King Henry the Fifth</i> ,	1599.		

1. *PERICLES*, 1590. That the greater part, if not the whole, of this drama, was the composition of Shakspeare, and that it is to be considered as his earliest dramatic effort, are positions, of which the first has been rendered highly probable by the elaborate disquisitions of Messrs. Steevens and Malone, and may possibly be placed in a still clearer point of view by a more condensed and lucid arrangement of the testimony already produced, and by a further discussion of the merits and peculiarities of the play itself; while the second will, we trust, receive additional support by inferences legitimately deduced from a comprehensive survey of scattered and hitherto insulated premises.

The evidence required for the establishment of a high degree of probability under the first of these positions necessarily divides itself into two parts; the external and the internal evidence. The former commences with the original edition of *Pericles*, which was entered on the Stationer's books by Edward Blount, one of the printers of the first folio edition of Shakspeare's plays, on the 20th of May,*

* "20 May, 1608.—Edw. Blount Entered under t'hands of Sir Geo. Bucke, Kt. and Mr. Warden Seton, a booke called: The booke of *Pericles Prynce of Tyre*."

"A booke by the like authoritie, called *Anthony and Cleopatra*." Chalmers's Supplemental Apology,

1608, but did not pass the press until the subsequent year, when it was published, not, as might have been expected, by Blount, but by one Henry Gosson, who placed Shakspeare's name at full length in the title-page.

It is worthy of remark, also, that this edition was entered at Stationer's Hall together with Antony and Cleopatra, and that it, and the three following editions, which were also in quarto, were styled in the title-page, "the much admired play of Pericles." As the entry, however, was by Blount, and the edition by Gosson, it is probable, as Mr. Malone has remarked, that the former had been anticipated by the latter, through the procurance of a play-house copy.* It may also be added, that Pericles was performed at Shakspeare's own theatre, The Globe. The next ascription of this play to our author, is found in a poem entitled "The Times Displayed in Six Sestiyads," by S. Sheppard, 4to, 1646, dedicated to Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and containing, in the ninth stanza of the sixth Sestiad, a positive assertion of Shakspeare's property in this drama:—

" See him whose tragick sceans Euripides
Doth equal, and with Sophocles we may
Compare *great Shakspear*; Aristophanes
Never like him his fancy could display,
Witness the *Prince of Tyre*, HIS *Pericles*."

This high eulogium on Pericles received a direct contradiction very shortly afterwards from the pen of an obscure poet named Tatham, who bears, however, an equally strong testimony as to Shakspeare being the author of the piece, which he thus presumes to censure:—

" But Shakspeare, the plebeian driller, was
Founder'd in HIS *Pericles*, and must not pass."†

To these testimonies in 1646 and 1652, full and unqualified, and made at no distant period from the death of the bard to whom they relate, we have to add the still more forcible and striking declaration of Dryden, who tells us, in 1677, and in words as strong and as decisive as he could select, that

" Shakspeare's *own muse*, HIS *Pericles* first bore."‡

The only drawback on this accumulation of external evidence is the omission of Pericles in the first edition of our author's works; a negative fact which can have little weight when we recollect, that both the memory and judgment of Heminge and Condell, the poet's editors, were so defective, that they had forgotten Troilus and Cressida, until the entire folio and the table of contents had been printed, and admitted Titus Andronicus, and the Historical Play of King Henry the Sixth, probably for no other reasons, than that the former had been, from its unmerited popularity, brought forward by Shakspeare on his own theatre, though there is sufficient internal evidence to prove, without the addition of a single line; and because the latter, with a similar predilection of the lower orders in its favour, had, on that account, obtained a similar, though not a more laboured attention from our poet, and was therefore deemed by his editors, though very unnecessarily, a requisite introduction to the two plays on the reign of that monarch which Shakspeare had really new-modelled.

It cannot, consequently, be surprising that, as they had forgotten Troilus and Cressida until the folio had been printed, they should have also forgotten Pericles until the same folio had been in circulation, and when it was too late to correct the omission; an error which the second folio has, without doubt or examination, blindly copied.

p. 488, 489. By a somewhat singular mistake, the *second* of May is mentioned by Mr. Malone, as the date of the entry of Pericles.

* The four quarto editions of Pericles are dated 1609, 1619, 1630, and 1635.

† Verses by J. Tatham, prefixed to Richard Brome's *Jovial Crew or the Merry Beggars*, 4to. 1652.

‡ Prologue to the tragedie of *Circe*, by Charles D'Avenant, 1677.

If the external evidence in support of Shakspeare being the author of the greater part of this play be striking, the internal must be pronounced still more so, and, indeed, absolutely decisive of the question; for, whether we consider the style and phraseology, or the imagery, sentiment, and humour, the approximation to our author's uncontested dramas appears so close, frequent, and peculiar, as to stamp irresistible conviction on the mind.

The result has accordingly been such as might have been predicted under the assumption of the play being genuine; for the more it has been examined, the more clearly has Shakspeare's large property in it been established. It is curious, indeed, to note the increased tone of confidence which each successive commentator has assumed in proportion as he has weighed the testimony arising from the piece itself. Rowe, in his first edition, says, "it is owned that some part of *Pericles* certainly was written by him, particularly the last act;" Dr. Farmer observes that the hand of Shakspeare may be *seen* in the latter part of the play; Dr. Percy remarks, that "more of the phraseology used in the genuine dramas of Shakspeare prevails in *Pericles*, than in any of the other six doubted plays," and, of the two rival restorers of this drama, Steevens and Malone, the former declares; — "I admit without reserve that Shakspeare,

——— "whose hopeful colours
Advance a half-fac'd sun, striving to shine,"

is visible in many scenes throughout the play; — the *purpurei panni* are Shakspeare's, and the rest the productions of some inglorious and forgotten playwright;" — adding, in a subsequent paragraph, that *Pericles* is valuable, "as the engravings of Mark Antonio are valuable not only on account of their beauty, but because they are supposed to have been executed under the eye of Raffaello;" while the latter gives it as his corrected opinion, that "the congenial sentiments, the numerous expressions bearing a striking similitude to passages in his undisputed plays, some of the incidents, the situation of many of the persons, and in various places the colour of the style, all these combine to set the seal of Shakspeare on the play before us, and furnish us with internal and irresistible proofs, that a considerable portion of this piece, as it now appears, was written by him. The greater part of the three last acts may, I think, on this ground be safely ascribed to him; and his hand may be traced occasionally in the other two divisions." Lastly, Mr. Douce asserts, that "many will be of opinion that it contains more than he might have written than either *Love's Labour's Lost*, or *All's Well that Ends Well*."

For satisfactory proof that the style, phraseology, and imagery of the greater part of this play are truly Shakspearean, the reader is referred to the commentators, who have noticed, with unwearied accuracy, all the numerous coincidences which, in these respects, occur between *Pericles* and the poet's subsequent productions; similitudes so striking, as to leave no doubt that they originated from one and the same source.

If we attend, however, a little further to the dramatic construction of *Pericles*, to its humour, sentiment, and character, not only shall we find additional evidence in favour of its being, in a great degree, the product of our author, but fresh cause, it is expected, for awarding it a higher estimation than it has hitherto obtained.

However wild and extravagant the fable of *Pericles* may appear, if we consider its numerous chorusses, its pageantry, and dumb shows, its continual succession of incidents, and the great length of time which they occupy, yet is it, we may venture to assert, the most spirited and pleasing specimen of the nature and fabric of our earliest romantic drama which we possess, and the more valuable, as it is the only one with which Shakspeare has favoured us.

"We should therefore welcome this play, an admirable example of the neglected favourites of our ancestors, with something of the same feeling that is experienced in the reception of an old

and valued friend of our fathers or grandfathers. Nay, we should like it the better for its gothic appendages of pageants and chorusses, to explain the intricacies of the fable; and we can see no objection to the dramatic representation even of a series of ages in a single night, that does not apply to every description of poem which leads in perusal from the fire-side at which we are sitting, to a succession of remote periods and distant countries. In these matters, faith is all-powerful; and, without her influence, the most chastely cold and critically correct of dramas is precisely as unreal as the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or the *Winter's Tale*." *

Perfectly coinciding in opinion with this ingenious critic, and willing to give an indefinite influence to the illusion of the scene, we have found in *Pericles* much entertainment from its uncommon variety and rapidity of incident, qualities which peculiarly mark the genius of Shakspeare, and which rendered this drama so successful on its first appearance, that the poets of the time quote its reception as a remarkable instance of popularity." †

A still more powerful attraction in *Pericles* is, that the interest accumulates as the story proceeds; for, though many of the characters in the earlier part of the piece, such as Antiochus and his Daughter, Simonides and Thaisa, Cleon and Dionyza, disappear and drop into oblivion, their places are supplied by more pleasing and efficient agents, who are not only less fugacious, but better calculated for theatric effect. The inequalities of this production are, indeed, considerable, and only to be accounted for, with probability, on the supposition, that Shakspeare either accepted a coadjutor, or improved on the rough sketch of a previous writer; the former, for reasons which will be assigned hereafter, seems entitled to a preference, and will explain why, in compliment to his dramatic friend, he has suffered a few passages, and one entire scene, of a character totally dissimilar to his own style and mode of composition, to stand uncorrected; for who does not perceive that of the closing scene of the second act, not a sentence or a word escaped from the pen of Shakspeare, and yet, that the omission of a few lines would have rendered that blameless and consistent, which is now, with reference to the character of Simonides, a tissue of imbecility, absurdity, and falsehood. ‡

* Monthly Review, New Series, vol. lxxvii. p. 158.

† Thus, in the prologue to a comedy entitled *The Hog has lost his Pearl*, 1614, the author, alluding to his own production, says,

————— "if it prove so happy as to please,
Well say, 'tis fortunate, like *Pericles*."

‡ As this is the only scene in the play which disgusts from its *total dereliction of nature*, a result at once decisive as to Shakspeare having no property in it; and as the mere *omission* of a few lines, not a word being either added or altered, will be sufficient to render the whole probable and inoffensive, I cannot avoid wishing that such curtailment might be adopted in every future edition.

SCENE V.

PENTAPOLIS. *A Room in the Palace.*

Enter SIMONIDES and the KNIGHTS: SIMONIDES reading a letter.

Knights. May we not get access to her, my lord?

Sim. Faith, by no means; it is impossible.

Knights. Though loath to bid farewell we take our leaves. *(Exeunt.)*

Sim. So —

They're well dispatch'd; now to my daughter's letter: She tells me here, she'll wed the stranger knight; Well I commend her choice; And will no longer have it be delay'd. Soft, here he comes: — I must dissemble it.

Enter PERICLES.

Per. All fortune to the good Simonides!

Sim. To you as much, sir! I am beholden to you, For your sweet music this last night: my ears, I do protest, were never better fed With such delightful pleasing harmony.

Per. It is your grace's pleasure to commend; Not my desert.

Sim. Sir, you are music's master.

Per. The worst of all her scholars, my good lord.

Sim. Let me ask one thing. What do you think, sir, of

My daughter?

Per. As of a most virtuous princess.

Sim. And she is fair too, is she not?

Per. As a fair day in summer; wondrous fair.

Sim. My daughter, sir, thinks very well of you;

Ay, so well, that — peruse this writing, sir.

Per. What's here!

A letter, that she loves the knight of Tyre?

'Tis the king's subtilty, to have my life. *(Aside.)*

O, seek not to intrap, my gracious lord,

A stranger and distressed gentleman,

'That never aim'd so high, to love your daughter,

But bent all offices to honour her.

Sim. Thou hast bewitch'd my daughter, and thou art

A traitor.

Per. By the gods, I have not, sir.

Never did thought of mine levy offence;

Nor never did my actions yet commence

A deed might gain her love, or your displeasure.

My actions are as noble as my thoughts,

'That never relish'd of a base descent.

I came unto your court, for honour's cause,

No play, in fact, more openly discloses the hand of Shakspeare than *Pericles*, and fortunately his share in its composition appears to have been very considerable; he may be distinctly, though not frequently, traced, in the first and second acts; after which, feeling the incompetency of his fellow-labourer, he seems to have assumed almost the entire management of the remainder, nearly the whole of the third, fourth, and fifth acts bearing indisputable testimony to the genius and execution of the great master.

The truth of these affirmations will be evident, if we give a slight attention to the sentiment and character which are developed in the scenes before us. It has been repeatedly declared, that *Pericles*, though teeming with incident, is devoid of character, an assertion which a little scrutiny is alone sufficient to refute.

Shakspeare has ever delighted in drawing the broad humour of inferior life, and in this, which we hold to be, the first heir of his dramatic invention, no opportunity is lost for the introduction of such sketches; accordingly, the first scene of the second act, and the third and sixth scenes of the fourth act, are occupied by delineations of this kind, coloured with the poet's usual strength and verisimilitude, and painting the shrewd but honest mirth of laborious fishermen, and the vicious *badinage* of the inhabitants of a brothel. Leaving these traits, however, which sufficiently speak for themselves, let us turn our view on the more serious persons of the drama.

Of the minor characters belonging to this group, none, except *Helicanus* and *Cerimon*, are, it must be confessed, worthy of consideration; the former is respectable for his fidelity and integrity, though not individualised by any peculiar attribution, but in *Cerimon*, who exhibits the rare union of the nobleman and the physician, the most unwearied benevolence, the most active philanthropy, are depicted in glowing tints, and we have only to regret that he fills not a greater space in the business of the drama. He is introduced in the second scene of the third act, as having

“ Shaken off the golden slumber of repose,”

to assist, in a dreadfully inclement night, some shipwrecked mariners:

Cer. Get fire and meat for these poor men;
It has been a turbulent and stormy night.

Serv. I have been in many; but such a night as this,
Till now, I ne'er endur'd.”

His prompt assistance on this occasion calls forth the eulogium of some gentlemen who had been roused from their slumbers by the violence of the tempest:

“ Your honour has through *Ephesus* pour'd forth
Your charity, and hundreds call themselves
Your creatures, who by you have been restor'd:
And not your knowledge, personal pain, but even
Your purse, still open, hath built lord *Cerimon*
Such strong renown as time shall never—

And not to be a rebel to her state;
And he that otherwise accounts of me,
This sword shall prove he's honour's enemy.

Sim. Now, by the gods, I do applaud his courage. (*Aside.*)
Here comes my daughter, she can witness it.

Enter THAISA.

Yea, mistress, are you so peremptory?
(*Addressing his daughter.*)

Will you, not having my consent, bestow
Your love and your affections on a stranger?—
Hear, therefore, mistress; frame your will to mine,—
And you, sir, hear you.—Either be rul'd by me,
Or I will make you—man and wife.—
And for a further grief,—God give you joy!
What, are you both agreed?

Thais. Yes, if you love me, sir.

(*Addressing Pericles.*)

Per. Even as my life, my blood that fosters it.

(*Exeunt.*)

Thus contracted, the scene would no longer excite the “supreme contempt” which Mr. Steevens expresses for it, adding in reference to its original state, “such another gross, nonsensical dialogue, would be sought for in vain among the earliest and rudest efforts of the British theatre. It is impossible not to wish that the *Knights* had horse-whipped *Simonides*, and that *Pericles* had kicked him off the stage.”

They are here interrupted by two servants bringing in a chest which had been washed on shore, and which is found to contain the body of Thaisa, the wife of Pericles, on a survey of which, Cerimon pronounces, from the freshness of its appearance, that it had been too hastily committed to the sea, adding an observation which would form as excellent motto to an Essay on the means of restoring suspended animation :

“ Death may usurp on nature many hours,
And yet the fire of life kindle again
The overpressed spirits.”

The disinterested conduct and philosophic dignity of Cerimon cannot be placed in a more amiable and striking light, than in that which they receive from the following declaration, worthy of being inscribed in letters of gold in the library of every liberal cultivator of medical science :

“ *Cerimon.* I held it ever
Virtue and “ knowledge ” * were endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches : careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expend ;
But immortality attends the former,
Making a man a god. ’Tis known, I ever
Have studied physie, through which secret art,
By turning o’er authorities, I have
(Together with my practice) made familiar
To me and to my aid, the blest infusions
That dwell in vegetives, in metals, stones ;
And I can speak of the disturbances
That nature works, and of her cures ; which give me
A more content in course of true delight
Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,
Or tie my treasure up in silken bags.”

If we now contemplate the two chief personages of the play, Pericles and Marina, and if it can be proved that these occupy, as they should do, the fore-ground of the picture, are well relieved, and characteristically sustained, nothing can be wanting, when combined with the other marks of authenticity collected by the commentators, to substantiate the genuine property of Shakspeare.

Buoyant with hope, ardent in enterprise, and animated by the keenest sensibility, Pericles is brought forward as a model of knighthood. Chivalric in his habits, romantic in his conceptions, and elegant in his accomplishments, he is represented as the devoted servant of glory and of love. His failings, however, are not concealed ; for the enthusiasm and susceptibility of his character lead him into many errors ; he is alternately the sport of joy and grief, at one time glowing with rapture, at another plunged into utter despair. Not succeeding in his amatory overture at the court of Antiochus, and shocked at the criminality of that monarch and his daughter, he becomes a prey to the deepest despondency :—

“ The sad companion, dull-eye’d melancholy,
By me so us’d a guest is, not an hour,
In the day’s glorious walk, or peaceful night,
The tomb where grief should sleep, can breed me quiet.” Act i. sc. 2.

Affliction, however, of a more unequivocal nature soon assails him ; he is shipwrecked on the coast of Greece, and compelled to solicit support from the benevolence of some poor fishermen :—

“ *Per.* He asks of you, that never us’d to beg.—
What I have been, I have forgot to know ;
But what I am, want teaches me to think on ;
A man shrunk up with cold : my veins are chill,
And have no more of life, than may suffice
To give my tongue that heat, to ask your help.” Act ii. sc. 1.

* For the sake of perspicuity, I have substituted the word “ knowledge,” as synonymous with “ cunning,” the term in the original.

From this state of dejection he is suddenly raised to the most sanguine pitch of hope, on perceiving the fishermen dragging in their net to shore a suit of rusty armour. Enveloped in this, he determines to appear at Pentapolis, the neighbouring capital of Simonides, as knight and gentleman; to purchase a steed with a jewel yet remaining on his arm, and to enter the lists of a tournament then in preparation, as a candidate for the hand of Thaisa, the daughter of the king. His exultation on the prospect, he thus expresses to his humble friends:

“ Now, by your furtherance, I am cloth'd in steel;
And, spite of all the rupture of the sea,
This jewel holds his bidding on my arm;
Unto thy value will I mount myself
Upon a courser, whose delightful steps
Shall make the gazer joy to see him tread.” Act ii. sc. 1.

The same rapid transition of the passions, and the same subjection to uncontrolled emotions mark his future course; the supposed deaths of his wife and daughter immerse him in the deepest abstraction and gloom; he is represented, in consequence of these events, as

“ A man, who for this three months hath not spoken
To any one, nor taken sustenance
But to prorogue his grief.” Act v. sc. 1.

We are prepared therefore to expect, that the discovery of the existence of these dear relatives should have a proportionate effect on feelings thus constituted, so sensitive and so acute; and, accordingly, the tide of rapture rolls with overwhelming force. Nothing, indeed, can be more impressively conducted than the recognition of Marina; it is Shakspeare, not in the infancy of his career, but approaching to the zenith of his glory.—Conviction on the part of Pericles is accompanied by a flood of tears; why, says his daughter,

————— “ Why do you weep? It may be
You think me an impostor.——
Per. O Helicanus, strike me, honour'd sir;
Give me a gash, put me to present pain;
Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me,
O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
And drown me with their sweetness. O, come hither,—
Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tharsus,
And found at sea again!—O Helicanus,
Down on thy knees, thank the holy gods.” Act v. sc. 1.

Nature appeals here to the heart in a tone not to be misunderstood.

Ecstasy, however, cannot be long borne, the feeble powers of man soon sink beneath the violence of the emotion, and mark how Shakspeare closes the conflict:

“ *Per.* ————— I embrace you, sir.
Give me my robes; I am wild in my beholding.
O heavens bless my girl! But hark, what music?—
Tell Helicanus, my Marina, tell him
————— for yet he seems to doubt,
How sure you are my daughter.—But what music?
Her. My lord, I hear none.
Per. None?
The music of the spheres: list, my Marina.—
Most heavenly music:
It nips me unto list'ning, and thick slumber
Hangs on mine eye-lids; let me rest. (*He sleeps.*)”—Act v. sc. 1.

It might be imagined that the above scene would almost necessarily preclude any chance of success in the immediately subsequent detail of the discovery of Thaisa; but the poet has contrived, notwithstanding, to throw both novelty and interest into the final dénouement of the play. Pericles, aided by the evidence of

Cerimon, recognises his wife in the character of high Priestess of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus; the acknowledgment is thus pathetically painted:—

“*Per.* ——— No more, you gods! your present kindness
Makes my past miseries sport: You shall do well,
That on the touching of her lips I may
Meet, and no more be seen. O come, be buried
A second time within these arms.

Marina. My heart
Leaps to be gone into my mother’s bosom. (*Kneels to THAISA.*)

Per. Look, who kneels here! Flesh of thy flesh, Thaisa;
Thy burden at the sea, and call’d Marina,
For she was yielded there.

Thaisa. Bless’d and mine own!” Act v. sc. 3.

To the many amiable and interesting female characters with which the undisputed works of our poet abound, may be added the Marina of this drama, who, like Miranda, Imogen, and Perdita, pleases by the gentleness, and artless tenderness of her disposition; though it must be allowed that Marina can only be considered as a sketch when compared with the more highly finished designs of our author’s maturer pencil: it is a sketch, however, from the hand of a master, and cannot be mistaken.

Pericles commits his infant daughter, accompanied by her nurse Lychorida, to the protection of Cleon and Dionyza;—

“*Per.* Good Madam, make me blessed in your care,
In bringing up my child.

Dion. I have one myself,
Who shall not be more dear to my respect,
Than your’s, my lord.

Per. Madam, my thanks and prayers.

Cleon. We’ll bring your grace even to the edge o’ the shore;
Then give you up to the mask’d Neptune, and
The gentlest winds of heaven.

Per. I will embrace
Your offer. Come, dear’st Madam.—O, no tears,
Lychorida, no tears:
Look to your little mistress, on whose grace
You may depend hereafter.”

Act iii. sc. 4.

The affectionate attachment of Marina to this friend of her infancy, and her deep-felt sorrow for her loss, advantageously open her character in the first scene of the fourth act, where she is introduced strewing the grave of Lychorida with flowers.

“*Enter MARINA, with a Basket of Flowers.*

Mar. No, no, I will rob Tellus of her weed,
To strew thy green with flowers: the yellows, blues,
The purple violets, and madrigolds,
Shall, as a chaplet, hang upon thy grave,
While summer days do last. Ah me! poor maid,
Born in a tempest, when my mother died,
This world to me is like a lasting storm,
Whirring me from my friends;

Act iv. sc. 1.

a passage, the leading idea of which, Shakspeare has transplanted with the same pleasing effect into his *Cymbeline*. *

Scarcely has Marina lamented the decease of her faithful attendant, when envy and malignity conspire against her life in the bosom of one who ought to have been

* ————— “With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I’ll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack
The flower that’s like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azur’d hare-bell, like thy veins, no nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander
Out-sweeten’d not thy breath.”

her surest safeguard against misfortune. Dionyza, perceiving her own daughter eclipsed by the beauty and accomplishments of her ward, resolves upon her destruction, and bribes a wretch, named Leonine, to the commission of the deed. The dialogue which takes place on this occasion, between the ruffian and his intended victim, places the artless simplicity of the latter in a very pleasing point of view.

“ *Leon.* Come, say your prayers speedily.

Mar. What mean you?

Leon. If you require a little space for prayer,
I grant it: Pray; but be not tedious,” &c.

Act iv. sc. 1.

Marina, snatched from this villain by the sudden intervention of pirates, is sold by them to the keeper of a brothel at Mitylene, a situation which appears to her more dreadful than that from which she has so narrowly escaped. She laments that Leonine had not executed his orders, or that the pirates had not thrown her overboard, and exclaims in language equally beautiful and appropriate,—

————— O that the good gods
Would set me free from this unhallow'd place,
Though they did change me to the meanest bird
That flies i' the purer air.” *

Indebted to her talents and accomplishments, which she represents to her purchasers as more likely to be productive than the wages of prostitution, she is allowed to quit the brothel uninjured, but under a compact to devote the profits of her industry and skill to the support of her cruel oppressors.

The mild fortitude and resignation which she exhibits during this humiliating state of servitude, and the simple dignity which she displays in her person and manners, are forcibly delineated in the following observations of Pericles, who, roused from his torpor by her figure, voice, and features, and interested in her narrative, thus addresses her;—

“ Pr'ythee speak;

Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou look'st

Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace

For the crown'd truth to dwell in:—“ yea” thou dost look

Like Patience, gazing on king's graves, and smiling

Extremity out of act :” †

a picture which is rendered yet more touching by a subsequent trait; for Lysimachus informs us

“ ————— she would never tell
Her parentage; being demanded that,
She would sit still and weep.”

Act v. sc. 1.

To this delightful sketch of female tenderness and subdued suffering, nearly all the interest of the last two acts is to be ascribed, and we feel, therefore, highly gratified that sorrows so unmerited, and so well borne, should, at length, terminate not only in repose, but in positive happiness. The poet, indeed, has allotted

* Act iv. sc. 6.—Much of the dialogue which passes among the worthless inhabitants of this bagnio, is seasoned with the strong and characteristic humour of Shakspeare. Boulton, a servant of the place, being ordered to cry Marina through the market of Mitylene, describing her personal charms, is asked, on his return, how he found the inclination of the people, to which he replies,

“Faith, they listened to me, as they would have hearkened to their father's testament. There was a Spaniard's mouth so watered, that he went to bed to her very description.

“*Bawd.* We shall have him here to-morrow with his best ruff on.

“*Boulton.* To-night, to-night. But, mistress, do you know the French knight that cowers i' the hams?

“*Bawd.* Who? Monsieur Veroles?

“*Boulton.* Ay; he offered to cut a caper at the proclamation; but he made a groan at it, and swore he would see her to-morrow.” Act iv. sc. 3.

“If,” says Mr. Malone, alluding to the lines in Italics, “there were no other proof of Shakspeare's hand in this piece, this admirable stroke of humour would furnish decisive evidence of it.”

† Act v. sc. 1. The similar passage in Twelfth Night will occur to every one.

strict retributory justice to all his characters; the bad are severely punished, while in Pericles and his daughter, we behold

“ Virtue preserv’d from fell destruction’s blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown’d with joy at last.” *

To whom, may it now be asked, if not to Shakspeare, can this play with any probability be given? Has not the above slight analysis of its two principal characters, with the quotations necessarily adduced, fully convinced us, that in style, sentiment, and imagery, and in the outline and conception of its chief female personage, the hand of our great master is undeniably displayed?

We presume, therefore, both the external and internal evidence for much the greater part of this play being the composition of Shakspeare may be pronounced complete and unanswerable; and it now only remains to enquire, if there be sufficient ground for considering Pericles, as we have ventured to do in this arrangement, as the FIRST dramatic production of our author’s pen.

It is very extraordinary that the positive testimony of Dryden as to the priority of Pericles, especially if we weigh well the import of the context, should ever have admitted of a moment’s doubt or controversy. Nothing can, we think, be more plainly declaratory than the lines in question, which shall be given at length:—

“ Your Ben and Fletcher in their *first young flight*,
Did no *Volpone*, no *Arbaces* write:
But hopp’d about, and short excursions made
From bough to bough, as if they were afraid;
And each were guilty of some *Slighted Maid*.
Shakspeare’s own muse his Pericles FIRST bore;
The Prince of Tyre was elder than *The Moor*:
’Tis miracle to see a *first good play*;
All hawthorns do not bloom on Christmas-day.
A slender poet must have time to grow,
And spread and burnish, as his brothers do:
Who still looks lean, sure with some p— is curst,
But no man can be Falstaff fat at *first*.” †

* Milton appears to have read Pericles with attention, and to have caught some of its phraseology, a circumstance strongly confirmatory of the genuineness of the play: thus Gower, in the opening lines, speaking of Antiochus, says,—

“ This king unto him took a pheere,
Who died and left a female heir,
So buxom, blithe, and full of face,
As heaven had lent her all her grace;”

a passage which evidently hung on Milton’s ear, when, in his L’Allegro, he is describing the uncertain origin of Euphrosyne:—

“ Fill’d her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.”

Again, in the *first* edition of Lycidas, v. 157, a very significant epithet seems to have been copied from the same source:—

“ Where thou perhaps under the HUMMING tide:” Milton.

“ The belching whale,
And HUMMING water must *o’erwhelm* thy corpse.” Pericles.

It is remarkable, that when Milton, in his second edition, altered the word to *whelming*, he still clung to his former prototype.

The notice may appear whimsical or trifling, but I cannot help observing here, that a few lines of the initiatory address of Gower irresistibly remind me of some of the cadences of The Lay of the Last Minstrel; for instance, this contemporary of Chaucer, alluding to the antiquity of his song, says,—

“ It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves, and holy ales;
And lords and ladies of their lives,
Have read it for restoratives:—
If you, born in these latter times,
When wit’s more ripe, accept my rhymes,
And that to hear an old man sing,
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might
Waste it for you, like taper-light.

† Prologue to the Tragedy of Circe, by Charles D’Avenant. 1675.

This passage, if it mean any thing, must imply, not only from the bare assertion of one line, but from all the accessory matter, that *Pericles* was the first young flight of Shakspeare, that it was the first offspring of his dramatic muse, his first play. That this was the meaning of Dryden, and not merely that *Pericles* was produced before *Othello*, will be further evident from recollecting the occasion of the Prologue whence these lines are taken. It was written to introduce the first play of Dr. Charles D'Avenant, then only nineteen years of age, and the bard expressly calls it "the blossom of his green years," the "rude essay of a youthful poet, who may grow up to write," expressions which can assimilate it with *Pericles* only on the supposition that the latter was, like *Circe*, a firstling of dramatic genius.

That Dryden, who wrote this prologue in 1675, possessed, from his approximation to the age of Shakspeare, many advantages for ascertaining the truth, none will deny. When the former had attained the age of twenty, the latter had been dead but thirty-five years, and the subsequent connection of the modern bard with the stage, and his intimacy with Sir William D'Avenant, who had produced his first play in 1629, and had been well acquainted with Heminge and the surviving companions of Shakspeare, would furnish him with sufficient *data* for his assertion, independent of any reliance on the similar declarations of Shepherd and Tatham.

Taking the statement of Dryden, therefore, as a disclosure of the fact, it follows, of course, from what has been previously said on the epoch of Shakspeare's commencement as a dramatic writer, that *Pericles* must be referred to the autumn of the year 1590, an assignment which the consideration of a few particulars will tend to corroborate.

In the first place, it may be remarked, that the numerous *dumb shows* of this play are of themselves a striking presumptive proof of its antiquity, indicating that Shakspeare, who subsequently laughed at these clumsy expedients, thought it necessary, at the opening of his career, to fall in with the fashion of the times, with a fashion which had reigned from the earliest establishment of our stage, which was still in vogue in 1590, but soon after this period became an object of ridicule, and began to decline.

Mr. Malone has remarked, that from the manner in which *Pericles* is mentioned in a metrical pamphlet, entitled "*Pimlyco or Runne Redcap*," 1609, there is reason to conclude that it is coëval with the old play of "*Jane Shore*;" * and this latter being noticed by Beaumont and Fletcher in conjunction with "*The Bold Beauchamps*," † a production which D'Avenant classes, in point of age, with "*Tamburlaine*" and "*Faustus*," ‡ pieces which appeared in or before 1590, he infers, perhaps not injudiciously, that *Pericles* has a claim to similar antiquity, and should be ascribed to the year 1590.

But a still stronger conclusion in favour of the date which, we think, should be assigned to *Pericles*, may be drawn from a suggestion of Mr. Steevens, which has not perhaps been sufficiently considered. This gentleman contends, that Shakspeare's *Prince of Tyre* was originally named *Pyrocles*, after the hero of Sidney's

* "Amazed I stood to see a crowd
Of civil throats stretch'd out so loud:
(As at a new play) all the roomes
Did swarm with gentiles mix'd with groomes §
So that I truly thought all these
Came to see *Shore* or *Pericles*."

† "I was ne'er at one of these before: but I should have seen "*Jane Shore*," and my husband hath promised me any time this twelvemonth to carry me to "*The Bold Beauchamps*."—*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

‡ "There is an old tradition,
That in the times of mighty *Tamburlaine*,
Of conjuring *Faustus*, and *The Beauchamps Bold*,
Your poets used to have the second day."
A Playhouse to be Let.

Arcadia, the character, as he justly observes, not bearing the smallest affinity to that of the Athenian statesman.

“It is remarkable,” says he, “that many of our ancient writers were ambitious to exhibit Sidney’s worthies on the stage : and when his subordinate agents were advanced to such honour, how happened it that Pyrocles, their leader, should be overlooked? Musidorus (his companion), Argaius and Parthenia, Phalantus and Eudora, Andromana, etc. furnished titles for different tragedies ; and perhaps Pyrocles, in the present instance, was defrauded of a like distinction. The names invented or employed by Sidney, had once such popularity, that they were sometimes borrowed by poets who did not profess to follow the direct current of his fables, or attend to the strict preservation of his characters.—I must add, that the Appolyn of the Story-book and Gower could have been rejected only to make room for a more favourite name ; yet, however conciliating the name of Pyrocles might have been, that of Pericles could challenge no advantage with regard to general predilection.—All circumstances therefore considered, it is not improbable that our author designed his chief character to be called Pyrocles, not Pericles, however ignorance or accident might have shuffled the latter (a name of almost similar sound) into the place of the former.”

The probability of this happy conjecture will amount almost to certainty, if we diligently compare Pericles with the Pyrocles of the “Arcadia ;” the same romantic, versatile, and sensitive disposition is ascribed to both characters, and several of the incidents pertaining to the latter are found mingled with the adventures of the former personage, while, throughout the play, the obligations of its author to various other parts of the romance may be frequently and distinctly traced, not only in the assumption of an image or a sentiment, but in the adoption of the very words of his once popular predecessor, proving incontestably the poet’s familiarity with and study of the Arcadia to have been very considerable.*

Now this work of Sidney, commenced in 1580, was corrected and published by his sister the Countess of Pembroke, in 1590, and the admiration which it immediately excited would naturally induce a young actor, then meditating his first essay in dramatic poetry, instantly to avail himself of its popularity, and, by appropriating the appellation of its principal hero, fix the attention of the public. That Shakspeare long preserved his attachment to the Arcadia, is evident from his King Lear, where the episode of Gloster and his sons is plainly copied from the first edition of this romance.†

The date assigned to Pericles, on this foundation, being admitted, it follows of course, that Shakspeare could not have had time to improve upon the sketch of a predecessor ; and yet from the texture of some parts of the composition, we are compelled to infer, that in this first effort in dramatic poetry, he must have condescended to accept the assistance of a friend, whose inferiority to himself is distinctly visible through the greater part of the first two acts, a position the probability of which seems to have induced Mr. Steevens to yield his assent to Dryden’s assertion. “In one light, indeed, I am ready,” remarks this acute commentator, “to allow Pericles was our poet’s first attempt. Before he was satisfied with his own strength, and trusted himself to the public, he might have tried his hand with a partner, and entered the theatre in disguise. Before he ventured to face an audience on the stage, it was natural that he should peep at them through the curtain.”

The objections which have been made to this priority of Pericles in point of time, may be reduced to three, of which the first is drawn from the non-enumeration of the play by Meres, when giving a list of our poet’s dramas, in 1598. But if it were the object of Shakspeare and his coadjutor to lie concealed from the public eye, of which there can be little doubt, since the former, as hath been

* Many instances of this kind have been pointed out by Mr. Steevens, in his notes on the play ; and the list might be much enlarged by a careful collation of the two productions.

† Where the chapter is entitled “The pitifull state and story of the Paphlagonian unkinde king and his kinde sonne, first related by the sonne, then by the blind father.”

remarked, having never owned his share in it, or supposing it to be forgotten, was afterwards willing to profit by the most valuable lines and ideas it contained, the omission of Meres is easily accounted for; yet granting that our author had been well known as the chief writer of *Pericles*, the validity of the objection is not thereby established, for we find in this catalogue neither the play of King Henry the Sixth, in any of its parts, nor the tragedy of *Hamlet*, pieces undoubtedly written and performed before the year 1598.

A second objection is founded on the title-page of the first edition of *Pericles*, published in 1609, where this drama is termed "the late and much admired play." It is obvious that from a word so indefinite in its signification as *late*, whether taken adverbially or adjectively, nothing decisive can result. To a play written eighteen years before, the lexicographic definitions of the term in question, namely, "in times past, not long ago, not far from the present," may, without doubt, justly apply; but we must also add, that it is uncertain whether the word is meant to refer to the period of the composition of the play, or to the date of its last representation; "lately performed" being most probably the sense in which the editor intended to be understood.

Lastly, Mr. Douce is of opinion that three of the devices of the knights in act ii. sc. 2, of *Pericles*, are copied from a translation of the "*Heroicall Devises of Paradin and Symeon*," printed in 1591, which, if correct, would necessarily bring forward the date of the play either to this or the subsequent year; but from this difficulty we are relieved even by Mr. Douce himself, who owns that two out of the three are to be found in "*Whitney's Emblems*," published in 1586, a confession which leads us to infer that the third may have an equally early origin.

From the extensive survey which has now been taken of the merits and supposed era of this early drama, the reader, it is probable, will gather sufficient data for concluding that by far the greater part of it issued from the pen of Shakspeare, that it was his first dramatic production, that it appeared towards the close of the year 1590, and that it deserves to be removed from the Appendix to the editions of Shakspeare, where it has hitherto appeared, and incorporated in the body of his works.

2. COMEDY OF ERRORS, 1591. That this play should be ascribed to the year 1591, and not to 1593, or 1596, has been fully established by Mr. Chalmers, to whom, therefore, the reader is referred, with this additional observation, that, from an account published in the *British Biographer*, of an interlude, named "*Jacke Jugeler*," which was entered in the Stationers' books in 1562-3, it appears that the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, on which this comedy is founded, "was, in part at least, known at a very early period upon the English stage," a further proof that versions or imitations of it had been in existence long prior to Warner's translation in 1595.

As the *Comedy of Errors* is one of the few plays of Shakspeare mentioned by Meres in 1598, and as we shall have occasion to refer more than once to the catalogue of this critic, it will be necessary, before we proceed farther in our arrangement, to give a transcript of this short but interesting article. It is taken from his "*Palladis Tamia. Wit's Treasury. Being the second part of Wit's Common Wealth*," 1598, and from that part of it entitled "*A comparative discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets*."

"As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latines, so Shakspeare, among y^e English, is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labour's Lost*, his *Love Labour's Wonne*, his *Midsummer's Night Dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice*: for tragedy, his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo and Juliet*."*

Some of the commentators, and more particularly Ritson and Steevens, have

* For this paragraph, the reader is referred to p. 282 of the original edition, or to p. 46 of the ninth volume of the *Censura Literaria*.

positively pronounced this play to have been originally the composition of a writer anterior to Shakspeare, and that it merely received some embellishments from our poet's pen :

“On a careful revision of the foregoing scenes,” says the latter gentleman, “I do not hesitate to pronounce them the composition of two very unequal writers. Shakspeare had undoubtedly a share in them ; but that the entire play was no work of his, is an opinion which (as Benedick says) ‘fire cannot melt out of me ; I will die in it at the stake.’ Thus, as we are informed by Aulus Gellius, lib. iii. cap. 3, some plays were absolutely ascribed to Plautus which in truth had only been (*retractatæ et expolitæ*) retouched and polished by him.”

We have frequently occasion to admire the wit, the classical elegance, and the ingenuity of Mr. Steevens, but we have often also to regret the force of his prejudices, and the unqualified dogmatism of his critical opinions. That the business of the Comedy of Errors is better calculated for farce than for legitimate comedy, cannot be denied ; and it must also be confessed that the doggrel verses attributed to the two Dromios, contribute little to the humour or value of the piece ; but let us, at the same time, recollect, that the admission of the latter was in conformity to the custom of the age in which this play was produced, and that the former, though perplexed and somewhat improbable,* possesses no small share of entertainment.

This drama of Shakspeare is, in fact, much more varied, rich, and interesting in its incidents, than the “*Menæchmi*” of Plautus ; and while in rigid adherence to the unities of action, time, and place, our poet rivals the Roman play, he has contrived to insinuate the necessary previous information for the spectator, in a manner infinitely more pleasing and artful than that adopted by the Latin bard, for whilst Plautus has chosen to convey it through the medium of a prologue, Shakspeare has rendered it at once natural and pathetic, by placing it in the mouth of Ægeon, the father of the twin brothers.

In a play of which the plot is so intricate, occupied in a great measure by mere personal mistakes, and their whimsical results, no elaborate development of character can be expected ; yet is the portrait of Ægeon touched with a discriminative hand, and the pressure of age and misfortune is so painted, as to throw a solemn, dignified, and impressive tone of colouring over this part of the fable, contrasting well with the lighter scenes which immediately follow, a mode of relief which is again resorted to at the close of the drama, where the re-union of Ægeon and Æmilia, and the recognition of their children, produce an interest in the denouement, of a nature more affecting than the tone of the preceding scenes had taught us to expect.

As to the comic action which constitutes the chief bulk of this piece, if it be true that to excite laughter, awaken attention, and fix curiosity, be essential to its dramatic excellence, the Comedy of Errors cannot be pronounced an unsuccessful effort ; both reader and spectator are hurried on to the close, through a series of thick coming incidents, and under the pleasurable influence of novelty, expectation, and surprise ; and the dialogue, so far from betraying the inequalities complained of by Ritson and Steevens, is uniformly vivacious, pointed, and even effervescing. Shakspeare is visible, in fact, throughout the entire play, as well in the broad exuberance of its mirth, as in the cast of its more chastised parts, a combination of which may be found in the punishment and character of Pinch the pedagogue and conjurer, who is sketched in the strongest and most marked style of our author.

If we consider, therefore, the construction of the fable, the narrowness of its basis, and that its powers of entertainment are almost exclusively confined to a continued deception of the external senses, we must confess that Shakspeare has not only improved on the Plautian model, but, making allowance for a somewhat

* The addition of the twin servants to their twin masters, doubles the improbability, while it adds to the fund of entertainment

too coarse vein of humour, has given to his production all the interest and variety that the nature and the limits of his subject would permit.

3. *LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST*: 1591. In the first edition of Mr. Malone's Chronological Essay on Shakspeare's Plays, which was published in January, 1778, the year 1591 is the date assigned to this drama, an epoch, which, in the re-impression of 1793, was changed in the catalogue for the subsequent era of 1594, though the reasons given for this alteration appeared so inconclusive to the chronologist himself, that he ventures in the text merely to say,—“ I think it probable, that our author's first draft of this play was written in or before 1594,” a mode of expression which leaves as much authority to the former as the latter date. In short, the only motive brought forward for the present locality of this piece in Mr. Malone's list, where it appears posterior to “ *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*,” *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, is, that there is more attempt at delineation of character in it than in either the first or second of the plays just mentioned, a reason which loses all its weight the moment we seriously contrast this comedy with its supposed predecessors, for who would then think of assigning to the very slight sketches of *Biron* and *Katharine*, any mark of improvement, either in poetic or dramatic strength, over the imaginative powers of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or the strong, broad, and often characteristic outlines of *The Taming of the Shrew*!

The construction, indeed, of the whole play, the variety of its versification, the abundancy of its rhymes, and the length and frequency of its doggerel lines, very clearly prove this comedy to be one of our author's very earliest compositions; indications which originally disposed Mr. Malone to give it to the year which we have adopted, and which induced Mr. Chalmers to assign it to 1592, though why he prefers this year to the preceding does not appear.

Of *Love's Labour's Lost*, as it was performed in the year 1591, we possess no exact transcript; for, in the oldest edition which has hitherto been found of this play, namely that of 1598, it is said in the title-page to be “ newly corrected and augmented,” with the further information, that it had been “ presented before Her Highness the last Christmas;” facts which show, that we are in possession not of the first draft or edition of this comedy, but only of that copy which represents it as it was “ revived and improved” for the entertainment of the Queen, in 1597.

The original sketch, whether printed or merely performed, we conceive to have been one of the pieces alluded to by Greene, in 1592, when he accuses Shakspeare of being “ an absolute *Johannes fac-totum*” of the stage, primarily and principally from the mode of its execution, which, as we have already observed, betrays the earliness of its source in the strongest manner; secondarily, that, like *Pericles*, it occasionally copies the language of the *Arcadia*, then with all the attractive novelty of its reputation in full bloom,* and thirdly, that in the fifth act, various allusions to the Muscovites or Russians seem evidently to point to a period when Russia and its inhabitants attracted the public consideration, a period which we find, from Hackluyt, to have occupied the years 1590 and 1591, when, as Warburton and Chalmers have observed, the arrangement of Russian commerce engaged very particularly the attention, and formed the conversation, of the court, the city, and the country.†

It may be also remarked, that while no play among our author's works exhibits more decisive marks of juvenility than *Love's Labour's Lost*, none, at the same time, is more strongly imbued with the peculiar cast of his youthful genius; for in style and manner, it bears a closer resemblance to the *Venus and Adonis*, the *Rape of Lucrece*, and the earlier Sonnets, than any other of his genuine dramas. It presents us, in short, with a continued contest of wit and repartee, the per-

* Vide Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, p. 281, 282; and Douce's Illustrations, vol. i. p. 238.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 283.

sons represented, whether high or low, vying with each other, throughout the piece, in the production of the greatest number of jokes, sallies, and verbal equivoques. The profusion with which these are everywhere scattered, has, unfortunately, had the effect of throwing an air of uniformity over all the characters, who seem solely intent on keeping up the ball of raillery; yet is Biron now and then discriminated by a few strong touches, and Holofernes is probably the portrait of an individual, some of his quotations having justly induced the commentators to infer, that Florio, the author of "First and Second Fruits," dialogues in Italian and English, and of a Dictionary, entitled "A World of Words," was the object of the poet's satire.

If in dramatic strength of painting this comedy be deficient, and it appears to us, in this quality, inferior to *Pericles*, we must, independent of the vivacity of its dialogue already noticed, acknowledge, that it displays several poetical gems, that it contains many just moral apophthegms, and that it affords, even in the closet, no small fund of amusement; and here it is worthy of being remarked, and may, indeed, without prejudice or prepossession, be asserted, that, even to the earliest and most unfinished dramas of our poet, a peculiar interest is felt to be attached, not arising from the fascination of a name, but from an intrinsic and almost inexplicable power of pleasing, which we in vain look for in the juvenile plays of other bards, and which serves, perhaps better than any other criterion, to ascertain the genuine property of Shakspeare; it is, in fact, a touchstone, which, when applied to *Titus Andronicus*, and what has been termed the *First Part of Henry the Sixth*, must, if every other evidence were wanting, flash conviction on our senses.

4. KING HENRY THE SIXTH: PART THE FIRST: 1592;

5. KING HENRY THE SIXTH: PART THE SECOND: 1592:

It will be immediately perceived that this arrangement is intended to exclude what has very improperly, in modern times, been ascribed to Shakspeare as the *First Part of his King Henry the Sixth*. The spuriousness of this part, indeed, has been so satisfactorily proved by Mr. Malone, that no doubt can be supposed any longer to rest on the subject; and, if any lingered, it would be still further shaken by what has since transpired; for, from the discovery of Mr. Henslowe's Accounts, at Dulwich College, it appears that this play was never entitled, as Mr. Malone had conjectured, to its present appellation, but was simply styled as it is here entered, *Henry the Sixth*, and had no connection with the subsequent plays of Peele and Marlowe on the same reign. The entry is dated the 3d of March, 1591, and the play being the property of Lord Strange's company, and performed at the Rose theatre, with neither of which Shakspeare had, at any time, the smallest connection, render the external testimony still more confirmatory of Mr. Malone's position, as to the antiquity, priority, and insulated origin of this drama. The internal evidence, however, is quite sufficient for the purpose; for the hand of Shakspeare is nowhere visible throughout the entire of this "Drum-and-trumpet-Thing," as Mr. Morgan has justly termed it.* Yet that our author, subsequent to his re-modelling "*The first Part of the Contention*," and "*The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke*," might alter the arrangement, or slightly correct the diction of this play, is very possible,—an interference, however trivial, which probably induced the editors of the first folio, from the period in which this design was executed, to register it with Shakspeare's undisputed plays, under the improper title of *The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth*.†

As this drama therefore, which we hold to contain not ten lines of Shakspeare's

* An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff. 8vo. 1777, p. 49.

† It is conjectured by Mr. Malone, that Shakspeare, for the advantage of his own theatre, having written a few lines in *The First Part of King Henry VI.*, after his own *Second* and *Third Part* had been played, the editors of the first Folio conceived this a sufficient warrant for attributing it, along with the others, to him, in the general collection of his works. His prior supposition, however, "that they gave it a place as a necessary introduction to the two other parts," especially if we consider the great popularity which it had enjoyed, and the general ignorance of the audience in historical lore, will sufficiently account, in those lax times of literary appropriation, for its insertion and attribution.

composition, was, when originally produced, called *The Play of Henry VI.*, and in 1623, registered *The Third Part of King Henry VI.*: though, in the folio published during the same year, it was then for the first time named the first part, would it not be allowable to infer, that the two plays which our poet built on the foundations of Marlowe, or perhaps Marlowe, Peele, and Greene, though not printed before they appeared in the folio, were yet termed, not as they are designated in the modern editions, the second and third parts but as we have here called them, the first and second parts? Such, in fact, appears to have been the case; for, since the publication of Mr. Malone's Essay, an entry on the Stationers' Registers has been discovered, * made by Tho. Pavier, and dated April 19th, 1602, of "The 1st and 2d pts of Henry VI. ij. books;" which entry, whether it be supposed to apply to the original "Contention" and "True Tragedy," or to an intended edition of the same plays as altered by Shakspeare, clearly proves, that this designation of first and second was here given either to the primary or secondary set of these two plays, and if applied to one set, would necessarily be applicable to, and used in speaking of, the other.

These two plays then, founded on "The First Part of the Contention of the Two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster," and on the "Second, or The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke," written by Marlowe and his friends about the year 1590, † we conceive to have been brought forward by Shakspeare with great and numerous improvements, in 1592.

The vacillation of the commentators in determining the era of our author's two parts of Henry the Sixth, has been very extraordinary. The year 1592 was fixed upon in 1778; this, in 1793, was changed to 1593, or 1594; and in 1803, to 1591; while Mr. Chalmers, in 1799, had adopted the date of 1595!

That these plays had received their new dress from the hand of Shakspeare, previous to September, 1592, is, we think, irreversibly established by Greene's parody, in his "Groatsworth of Wit," on a line in the second of these productions, an allusion which, with the context, can neither be set aside nor misapplied: that they were thus re-modelled in 1592, rather than in 1591, will appear highly probable, when we reflect that, in the passage where this parody is found, Shakspeare is termed, in reference to the stage, an absolute *Johannes factotum*, an epithet which, as we have before remarked, implies that our poet had written and altered several pieces before that period, and had the two parts of Henry the Sixth been early in the series, that is immediately subsequent to *Pericles*, the indignation of Greene, no doubt, had been sooner expressed; for we find him writing with great warmth, under a sense of recent injury, and under the pressure of mortal disease; "albeit weakness," says he, "will scarce suffer me to write;" a time which certainly would not have been chosen for the annunciation of his anger, had the supposed offence been given, and it must have been known as soon as committed, a year or two before. We feel confident, therefore, from this chain of argument, that the two Parts of Henry the Sixth, included in our catalogue, were not brought on the stage before 1592, and then only just in time to enable poor Greene to express his sentiments ere he left this sublunary scene.

The plan which Mr. Malone has adopted in printing these plays, that of distinguishing the amended and absolutely new passages from the original and comparatively meagre text of Marlowe and his coadjutors, seems to have been caught from a hint dropped by Mr. Maurice Morgan, who speaking of these two Parts of Henry VI., observes, that "they have certainly received what may be called a thorough repair.—I should conceive, it would not be very difficult to feel

* The discovery was made by Mr. Chalmers, vide *Supplemental Apology*, p. 292.

† Mr. Malone, in his "Dissertation on King Henry VI." was of opinion, that the "First Part of the Contention," &c. came from the pen of Robert Greene; but in his "Chronological Order," he inclines to the supposition of Marlowe being the author of both Parts. It is more probable, I think, from the language of the "Groats worth of Wit," that Marlowe, Greene, and Peele were jointly concerned in their composition.

one's way through these plays, and distinguish everywhere the metal from the clay." *

It will not be denied that the task thus suggested, has been carried into execution with much skill and discrimination, and furnishes a curious proof of the plastic genius and extraordinary powers of adaptation with which our poet was gifted in the very dawn of his career. Compared with the pieces which he had hitherto produced, a style of far greater dignity, severity, and tragic modulation was to be formed, and accordingly those portions of these plays which emanated solely or in a high degree from the mind of Shakspeare, will be found in many instances even not inferior to the best parts of his latest and most finished works, while, at the same time, they harmonise sufficiently with the general tone of his predecessors, to preclude any flagrant breach of unity and consistency in the character of the diction and versification, though, to a practised critic, the superiority of our author, both in the fluency of his metre, and the beauty and facility of his expression, may be readily discerned.

Contrary to the common opinion, a strong and correct delineation of character appears to us the most striking feature in the two parts of this historical drama. That sainted, but powerless phantom, Henry of Lancaster, interests our feelings, notwithstanding the imbecilities of his public conduct, by the pious endurance of his sufferings, and the philosophic pathos of his sentiments. How much his patient sorrow and plaintive morality, depicted as they are amid the desolations of warfare, arrest and fascinate our attention by the power of contrast, perhaps no apathy can refuse to acknowledge. Mournfully sweet, indeed, are the strains which flow from this unhappy monarch, when, for an instant retired from the horrors of the Field of Towton, he pours forth the anguish of his soul, and closes his reflections with a picture of rural repose, glowing with such a mellow and lovely light amid the shades of regal misery which surround it, as to awaken sensations that steal through the bosom with a holy and delicious warmth.

Between this character, and that of Richard of Gloucester in the same play, what a strength of contrast! so decided is the opposition, indeed, that not a shadow, not an atom of assimilation exists. The ferocious wickedness of this hypocritical and sarcastic villain is as vividly and distinctly drawn in the Second or Last Part of Henry the Sixth as in the tragedy of Richard the Third, the soliloquies in acts the third and fifth as clearly developing the structure of his mind as any scene of the play distinguished by his regal title.

Nor do the other leading personages of these dramas exhibit less striking touches of the strong characterisation peculiar to our poet. The portraits of King Edward, and Queen Margaret, of the Dukes of York and Warwick, of Humphrey of Gloster and Cardinal Beaufort, are alike faithful to history and to nature, while the death of the ambitious prelate is unparalleled for its awful sublimity, its terrific delineation of a tortured conscience; a scene of which the impressions are so overpowering, that, to adopt the language of Dr. Johnson, "the superficial reader cannot miss them, the profound can image nothing beyond them."

As these two parts, therefore, whether we consider the original text, or the numerous alterations and additions of Shakspeare, hold a rank greatly superior to the elder play of

"Henry the Sixth in swaddling bands crown'd king,"

a production which, at the same time, offers no trace of any finishing strokes from the master-bard, it would be but doing justice to the original design of Shakspeare to insert for the future in his works only the two pieces which he remodelled, designating them as they are found in this arrangement, and which seems, indeed, merely a restoration of their first titles. This may the more readily be done, as there appears no necessary connection between the elder drama, and those of

* Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, p. 49, note.

Shakspeare on the same reign; whereas between the two plays of our author, and between them and his Richard the Third, not only an intimate union, but a regular series of unbroken action subsists.

If, however, it should be thought convenient to have the old play of Henry the Sixth within the reach of reference, let it be placed in an Appendix to the poet's works, dislodging for that purpose the disgusting Tragedy of Titus Andronicus, which has hitherto, to the disgrace of our national literature, and of our noblest writer, accompanied every edition aspiring to be complete, from the folio of 1623 to the re-impression of 1813!

5. A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM: 1593. In endeavouring to ascertain the order in which Shakspeare's plays were written, it would seem a duty, on the part of the chronologist, where no passage positively indicates the contrary, not to attribute to the poet the composition of several pieces during the course of the same year; for, admitting the fertility of our author to have been, what it unquestionably was, very great, still, without some certain date annihilating all room for conjecture, it would be a gross violation of probability to ascribe even to him the production of four or even three of his capital productions, and such productions too, in the space of but twelve months. This, however, has been done, in their respective arrangements, twice by Mr. Malone, and six times by Mr. Chalmers, the latter gentleman having allotted to our dramatist not less than seventeen plays in the course of only five years! Surely such an attribution is, of itself, sufficient to stagger the most willing credulity, particularly when we find that, during the course of this period, occupying the years 1595, 1596, 1597, 1598 and 1599, four such plays as the following are appropriated to one year, that of 1597,—Henry IV. the second Part, Henry V., The Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet. Now as these pieces, so far from resembling the light and rapid sketches of Lopez de la Vega or of Heywood, are among the most elaborate of our author's productions, and as no data with any pretensions to certainty can be adduced for the assignment in question, we must be allowed, notwithstanding the ingenuity and indefatigable research of Mr. Chalmers, to doubt the propriety of his chronological system.*

Acting, therefore, on this idea, that where no decisive evidence to the contrary is apparent, not more than two plays should be assigned to our bard in the compass of one year, and being firmly persuaded, from the argument which has been brought forward, that the two Parts of Henry the Sixth were the product of the year 1592, while, at the same time, we agree with the majority of the commentators in considering the Midsummer-Night's Dream as an early composition, it has been thought most consonant to probability to give to the latter, in lieu of the epoch of 1592, or 1595, or 1598, its present intermediate station; and this has been done, even though the plays on Henry the Sixth, being built on the basis of other writers, cannot be supposed to have occupied so much of the poet's time as more original efforts.

The Midsummer-Night's Dream, then, is the first play which exhibits the imagination of Shakspeare in all its fervid and creative power; for though, as mentioned in Meres's catalogue, as having numerous scenes of continued rhyme, as being barren in fable, and defective in strength of character, it may be pronounced the offspring of youth and inexperience, it will ever in point of fancy be considered as equal to any subsequent drama of the poet.

There is, however, a light in which the best plays of Shakspeare should be viewed, which will, in fact, convert the supposed defects of this exquisite sally of sportive invention into positive excellence. A unity of feeling most remarkably pervades and regulates their entire structure, and the Midsummer-Night's Dream,

* See his Table, in Supplemental Apology, p. 466, 467, where he tells us that in making it, he has been governed "rather by the influence of moral certainty, than directed by any supposed necessity of fixing some of the dramas to each year;" but where is the evidence that shall reconcile us to the necessity of passing over the years 1610, 1611, and 1612, without the production of a single play, and then ascribing to the year 1613, three such compositions, as The Tempest, The Twelfth-Night, and Henry VIII.?

a title in itself declaratory of the poet's object and aim, partakes of this bond, or principle of coalescence, in a very peculiar degree. It is, indeed, a fabric of the most buoyant and ærial texture, floating as it were between earth and heaven, and tinted with all the magic colouring of the rainbow,

“ The earth hath bubbles as the water has
And this is of them.”

In a piece thus constituted, where the imagery of the most wild and fantastic dream is actually embodied before our eyes, where the principal agency is carried on by beings lighter than the gossamer, and smaller than the cowslip's bell, whose elements are the moonbeams and the odoriferous atmosphere of flowers, and whose sport it is

“ To dance in ringlets to the whistling wind,”

it was necessary, in order to give a filmy and consistent legerity to every part of the play, that the human agents should partake of the same evanescent and visionary character; accordingly both the higher and lower personages of this drama are the subjects of allusion and enchantment, and love and amusement their sole occupation; the transient perplexities of thwarted passion, and the grotesque adventures of humorous folly, touched as they are with the tenderest or most frolic pencil, blending admirably with the wild, sportive, and romantic tone of the scenes where

“ Trip the light fairies and the dapper elves,”

and forming together a whole so variously yet so happily interwoven, so racy and effervescent in its composition, of such exquisite levity and transparency, and glowing with such luxurious and phosphorescent splendour, as to be perfectly without a rival in dramatic literature.

Nor is this piece, though, from the nature of its fable, unproductive of any strong character, without many pleasing discriminations of passion and feeling. Mr. Malone asks if “a single passion be agitated by the faint and childish solitudes of Hermia and Demetrius, of Helena and Lysander, those shadows of each other?” Now, whatever may be thought of Demetrius and Lysander, the characters of Hermia and Helena are beautifully drawn, and finely contrasted, and in much of the dialogue which occurs between them, the chords both of love and pity are touched with the poet's wonted skill. In their interview in the wood, the contrariety of their dispositions is completely developed; Hermia is represented as

————— “ keen and shrewd :
—— a vixen, when she went to school,
And, though but little, fierce,”

and in her difference with her friend, threatens to scratch her eyes out with her nails, while Helena, meek, humble, and retired, sues for protection, and endeavours in the most gentle manner to deprecate her wrath :

“ I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me : I was never curst ;” &c. Act iii. sc. 2.

And in an earlier part of this scene, where Helena first suspects that her friend had conspired with Demetrius and Lysander to mock and deride her, nothing can more exquisitely paint her affectionate temper, and the heartfelt pangs of severing friendship, than the following lines, most touching in their appeal, an echo from the very bosom of nature itself : —

“ Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid !—
Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,” &c.

Of the Fairy Mythology which constitutes the principal and most efficient part of this beautiful drama, it is the more necessary that we should take particular

notice, as it forms not only a chief feature of the superstitions of the age, but was, in fact, re-modelled and improved by the genius of our poet.

The utmost confusion has in general overshadowed this subject, from mixing the Oriental with the Gothic system of fabling, the voluptuous or monstrous Fairies of eastern and southern romance, with those of the popular superstition of the north of Europe; two races in all their features remarkably distinct, and productive of two very opposite styles both of imagery and literature.

The poets and romance writers of Spain, Italy, and France, have evidently derived the imaginary beings whom they term Fairies, whether of the benignant or malignant species, from the mythology of Persia and Arabia. The channel for this stream of fiction was long open through the medium of the crusades, and the dominions of the Moors of Spain, more especially when the language of these invaders became, during the middle ages, the vehicle of science and general information. Hence we find the strongest affinity between the Peri and Dives of the Persians, and the two orders of the Genii of the Arabians, and the Fairies and Demons of the south of Europe.

The Peri, or as the word would be pronounced in Arabic, the Fairi, of the Persians, are represented as females of the most exquisite beauty, uniformly kind and benevolent in their disposition, of the human form and size, and, though not limited to our transient existence, subject to death. They are supposed to inhabit a region of their own, to play in the plighted clouds, to luxuriate in the hues of the rainbow, and to live upon the exhalations of the jessamine and the rose.*

Contrasted with these lovely essences, the Dives are described as males of the most hideous aspect and ferocious temper; in their stature, monstrous, deformed, and abominable; in their habits, wicked, cruel, and unrelenting.

Very similar in their attributes, but with less beauty and brilliancy in the delineation of the amiable species, were the good and bad Genii of the Arabians; and, as in Persia, a Genistan, or Fairy-land, was allotted to the benignant class.

From these sources, then, is to be deduced that tone of fiction which pervades the romantic and poetical literature of the warmer European climates, especially in all that relates to the fair and beautiful of Oriental conception. In the Fairies of Boiardo and Ariosto, in the metrical and prose romances of France and Spain, and in the lays of Marie; in their "Fata Morgana, Urgande, and Mourgue La Faye," and in the "superhuman misioesses of Sir Launfale and Sir Gruelan," we readily discern their Persian prototype, the Peri, Mergian Banou.†

And to this cast of fiction, derived through the medium of the Italians, was Spenser indebted for the form and colouring which he has appropriated to his Fairies; beings, however, still more aloof from the Gothic popular elves than even the supernatural agents of the bards of Italy, as connecting with their orientalism, a continued allegorical, and, consequently, a totally abstract character.

From the origin, therefore, or *prima stamina* of the Fairies of Shakspeare, and of British popular tradition, we must turn to a very different quarter, even so far northward as to Scandinavia, the land of our Gothic progenitors. The establishment of the two kingdoms of the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, on the shores of the Euxine Sea, by colonies from the Scandick peninsula, took place at a very early period, and the consequence of these settlements was the speedy invasion and conquest of the southern provinces of the Roman empire; for Denmark and Germany having submitted to the arms of the Goths, these restless warriors seized upon Spain in 409, entered Italy and captured Rome in 410, invaded France in 412, and commenced their conquest of England in 447. Upon all these countries, but most permanently upon England, did they impose their language, and a large portion of their superstitions. Such were their influence and success, indeed, in this

* Vide Ouseley's Persian Miscellanies.

† The Lays of Lanval and Gruelan have been translated by Way in his *Fabliaux*, vol. i. p. 157, 177; a description also of Mourgue La Faye may be found in the preceding tale, called The Vale of False Lovers, taken from the prose romance of Lancelot du Lac, 3 vols. folio. bl. l. Paris. 1520.

island, that they not only compelled us to embrace their religious rites, but totally superseded our former manners and customs, and planted for ever in our mouths a diction radically distinct from that to which we had been accustomed, a diction which includes to this day a vocabulary of terms relative to our poetical and superstitious creeds which is alike common to both nations.*

Long, therefore, ere the Arabians began to disseminate their literature from the walls of Cordova, were the Goths in full possession not only of the Spanish peninsula, where their empire attained its height in the year 500, but of the greater part of this island. The Moors, it is well known, did not enter Spain until 712, consequently the Scandinavian emigrants had the opportunity of three centuries in that fine country, for the gradual propagation of their poetical credulity. Long, also, before the Crusades, the second supposed source of oriental superstition, could produce their imagined effect, are we able to trace the Fairy Mythology of the Goths in all its essential features. The first Crusade, under Godfrey, terminated in the capture of Jerusalem in July, 1099, and the speediest return of any of its adventurers may be ascribed to the year 1100; but so early as 863 do we find the belief of the Fairies established in Norway, and even introduced into our own country at an epoch as remote as the year 1013. The metrical fragments of Thiodolf, bard to Harold Fairhair, who ascended the throne of Norway in 863, bear testimony to the first of these assertions. Theodolf was an antiquary of such pre-eminence, that on his poetry was founded the early history of his country, and among the reliques of his composition is one recording an adventure of Svegger, the fourth king of Sweden, which clearly proves that Fairies and Fairy-land had even then become a portion of the popular creed. Svegger is represented as having made a vow to seek Fairy-land, and Odin, from whom he was descended. For this purpose he traverses, with twelve chosen companions, the wastes of the Greater Scythia; but, after consuming five years in vain in the pursuit, he returns home disappointed. In a second attempt, however, he is, unfortunately for himself, successful. In the east of Scythia rises suddenly from the plain so vast a mass of rock, that it assumes the appearance of an immense structure or palace. Passing by this pile with his friends, one evening after sunset, having freely enjoyed the pleasures of the banquet, Svegger was surprised to behold a Dvergur, a Fairy or Dwarf, sitting at the foot of the rock. Inflamed by wine, he and his companions boldly advanced towards the elf, who, then standing in the gates or portal of the pile, addressed the king, commanding him to enter if he wished to converse with Odin. The monarch, rushing forward, had scarcely passed the opening of the rock, when its portal closed upon him and the treacherous Fairy for ever! †

That the diminutive Being here introduced was of the race of Fairies, subsequently described in the *Volupsa* of Sæmund under the appellation of *Duergrs* or *Swart-Elves*, and who were placed under the direction of two superiors called *Motsogner* and *Durin*, is evident from the Gothic original of Thiodolf's fragment, which opens by declaring that this being who guarded the entrance of the enchanted cave, was one of the followers of Durin, who shrank from the light of day; and then immediately classes him with the *Dwergs*, ‡ an appellative which the Latin translators have rendered by the terms *pygmæi* and *nani*, pygmies and dwarfs.

That the fairy mythology of the Goths must have been known to this island about the year 1013, appears from a song composed by Sigvatur, who accompanied Canute to England as his favourite bard, on the invasion of his father Swain at the above era. Sigvatur describes himself as warned away from a cottage by its housewife, who, sitting at the threshold, vehemently forbids his approach, as she was preparing a propitiatory banquet of blood for the Fairies, with the view of

* Thus the Gothic terms *Fegur*, *Alfur*, *Uitrur*, *Dwergur*, *Meyar*, *Pucke*, *Drot*, are without doubt the prototypes of *Fairy*, *Elf*, *Wight*, *Dwarf*, *Mare*, *Puck* and *Trot*.

† Snor. Sturl. Hist. Reg. Norv. op. Schœning. vol. i. p. 18.

‡ Yrling : Sag. cap. xv. p. 15.

driving the war-wolf from her doors.* The word in the original here used for the Fairies, is *Alfa*, *Elves*, a designation which we shall find in the *Edda* applied generically to the whole tribe, however distinct in their functions or mode of existence.

Not only can we prove, indeed, the priority and high antiquity of the Gothic fairy superstitions on the unquestioned authority of *Thiodolf* and *Sigvatur*, but we can substantiate also the very material fact, that the scattered features of this mythology were collected and formed into a perfect system nearly a quarter of a century before any of the first crusaders could return to Europe. About the year 1077, *Sœmund* compiled the first or *Metrical Edda*, containing, among other valuable documents, the "*Voluspa*," a poem whose language indicates a very remote origin,† and where we find a minute and accurate description of the *Duer-gar* or Fairies, who are divided into two classes, of which the individuals are even carefully named and enumerated, a catalogue which is augmented in the "*Prose Edda*" composed by *Snorro* in 1215,‡ and still further increased in the "*Scalda*," written, it is supposed, about a year or two afterwards.

Having thus endeavoured to show that the "*Fairy Superstitions*" of the Goths were possessed of an antiquity sufficiently great to have procured their propagation through the medium of Scandinavian conquest and colonisation, long anterior to any oriental source, and that the genius of eastern fabling, when subsequently introduced into the south, was of a character totally distinct from the popular superstition of the north of Europe, we hasten to place before the reader a short sketch of the genealogy, attributes, and offices of the Gothic elves, in order that we may compare them with their poetical offspring, the popular fairies of Britain, and thence be able to appreciate the various modifications and improvements which the system received from the creative imagination of Shakspeare.

Under the term "*Norner*" the ancient Goths included two species of preternatural beings of a diminutive size, the "*Godar Norner*," or *Beneficent Elves*, and the "*Illnar Norner*," or *Malignant Elves*. Among the earliest bards of Scandinavia, in the *Voluspa*, and in the *Edda* of *Snorro*, these distinctions are accurately maintained, though under various appellations, either alluding to their habits, their moral nature, or their external appearance. The most common nomenclature, or division, however, was into "*Lios-alfar*," or *Bright Elves*, and "*Suart-alfar*," or "*Dock-alfar Swart*," or *Black Elves*, the former belonging to the "*Alfa-œttar*," or tribe of *alfs*, *fauns*, or *elves*, the latter to the "*Duer-ga-œttar*," or tribe of *Dwarfs*. §

The "*Alfs*" and "*Dwergs*," therefore, the Fairies and the Dwarfs, or in other words, the *Bright* and the *Swart Elves* of Scandinavia form together with a somewhat larger species which we shall have occasion shortly to mention, the whole of the machinery of whose origin we are in search.

Of this "*Alfa-folch*," "*Elfin-folk*," or *Fairy-people*, the "*Lios-alfar*," or *Bright Elves*, were supposed to be ærial spirits, of a beautiful aspect, sporting in the purest ether, and inhabiting there a region called "*Alf-heimur*," *Elf-ham*, or *Elf-home*. Their intercourse with mortals was always beneficent and propitious, and when they presided at a nativity, happiness and prosperity were their boon. They visited the cottages of the virtuous and industrious poor, blessing and assisting their efforts, ** and danced in mazy rounds by moonlight on the dewy grass, to the sound of the most enchanting music, leaving on the sward circular and distinct traces of their footsteps of a beautiful and lively green, vestiges of what in the Swedish language was called the "*Elf-dans*," a word which has been naturalised in our own tongue. †† The bright elves were also considered as propi-

* *Olæf. Helg. Haroldsons Saga*, cap. 92. See also, *Snorro* apud *Schœning*, tom. ii. p. 124. Hafn. 1778.

† *Gudm. Andr. Not. in Volusp. Stroph.* vi.

‡ Two chapters of the *Edda* of *Snorro*, *Myth.* 13, 15. are occupied by an illustrative enumeration of these *Duer-gi* or Fairies, and the "*Scalda*" has catalogued nearly one hundred of the same race.

§ *Resen. Edda Island. Myth.* xv.

** *Kornmann Templ. Natur.* part iii. cons. 12. p. 113.

†† *Ol. Magn. Gent. Septent.* lib. iii. c. 11. p. 107.

tious to women in labour, and desirous of undertaking all the duties of the cradle; * in short, wherever a fairy of this species was found; whether in the palace, the cottage, or the mine, it was always distinguished by a series of kind or useful offices.

In almost every respect the reverse of this benevolent race were the "Suart-alfar," or Swart Elves, who were neither spirits nor mortals, but of an intermediate nature, dwelling in the bowels of the earth, in mountains, caves, or barrows, of the same diminutive size as the bright elves, but unpleasing in their features, and though sometimes fair in their complexion, often dark and unlovely. † They were the dispensers of misfortune, and consequently their attendance at a birth became the harbinger of a predominating portion of evil; mischief, indeed, either in sport or anger, seems to have been their favourite employment. They, like those of the more friendly tribe, visited the surface of the earth at midnight, but the circular tracery of their revels was distinguished from the green ringlets of the beneficent kind by the ground being burnt and blasted wherever their footsteps had been impressed.

Among this species was also classed the "Incubus," by the Scandinavians termed "Mara, Meyar," or the "Mare;" by the Saxons "Alf" or "Alp;" by the Franconians "Drud," ‡ a fairy who haunted those who slept, and oppressed them by sitting on their chest. This elf was likewise considered as exerting a baneful influence at noon-time over those who heedlessly gave themselves to sleep in the fields, and was deemed particularly dangerous, at this hour, to pregnant women. § To the mischievous power of these Swart-elves was also ascribed, by the Gothic nations, the loss or exchange of children, who were borne away from the parental roof previous to the rites of baptism, and oftentimes an idiotic or deformed bantling was substituted in the place of the stolen infant. ** Generally were they found, indeed, spiteful and malicious in all their agency with mankind, whether in a playful or a serious mood; frequently injuring or destroying the cattle, riding the horses, plaiting their manes in knots, terrifying and leading wandering or benighted peasants astray, by voices, cries, by peals of laughter or delusive lights. ††

With all these evil propensities, however, they are uniformly represented by our Northern ancestors as singularly ingenious, and endowed with great mechanical skill, particularly that variety of the "Suart-alfar" termed "Bergmanlein," or Mountain-dwarfs, who were believed to inhabit caves and mines and barrows, ‡‡ and to be frequently and audibly employed in forging swords and armour of such excellent temper and strength as to be proof not only against the usual accidents of warfare, but against all the arts of magic and incantation. §§ This craft was denominated "Duerga Smithi," or "Fairy-Smithery," *** and was sometimes exercised in the formation of enchanted rings, and of automata which by the proper management of secret springs would transport their conductors through the air. ††† By the Swedes and Germans, also, these subterranean dwarfs, *virunculi montani*, were supposed to be sometimes busy in the laborious occupation of excavating the rocks, and to be occasionally useful to the miners in detecting latent veins of ore; but their agency was more generally deemed pernicious, and they were held to be the artificers of accident, the raisers of exhalations, and the exploders of the fire-damp. ‡‡‡ It should also be added, that, as the fre-

* Keysler de Mulierib. Fatid. sect. 23, p. 394. Peter le Loier, Treatise of Strange Sights and Apparitions, chap. ii. p. 19. 4to.

† Comment in Volusp. (Str. xv.) ex. Biblioth. Resenii.

‡ Keysler de Mulierib. Fatid. sect. 68, p. 497.

§ Keysler, sect. 68. p. 497.

** Wier. De Præstig. Dæm. l. i. c. 16. p. 104.

†† Ol. Mag. De Gent. Septentr. lib. vi. cap. 10, and Becker. Spectrol. p. 120.

‡‡ Kircher. Mund. Subter. lib. viii. sect. 4, c. 4. p. 123, and Agricola de Animant. Sub. c. 37. p. 78.

§§ Verel. in Hervar. Sag. cap. 7.

*** Vide Verel. in Hervar. Sag. voce Duerga Smithi.

††† See, in the Minor Voluspa, the Hildi-svini of Hyndla, a species of enchanted steed. Stroph. v. et vii.

‡‡‡ Ol. Magn. de Gent. Septentr. lib. vi. cap. 10.

quent inmates of barrows and sepulchral vaults, they were considered as the guardians of hidden treasures, which they protected under the form of diminutive old men with corrugated faces; * while as the haunters of the mine, they affected the dress of the workmen, appearing in a shirt or frock, with a leathern apron.

Beside these two species of the fairy tribe, the Bright and Swart Elves, a larger kind was acknowledged by the ancient Germans, under the appellations of Guteli and Trulli, who were esteemed not only harmless, but so friendly to mankind, that they delighted in performing the domestic offices of the household, such as cleaning the dishes, bringing in wood, grooming the horses, etc. †, labouring chiefly in the night-time, and often assuming the human stature, form, and garb.

Such are the leading features of the Fairy Mythology of the Goths, which appears to have been introduced into Britain as early as the eleventh century, and to have gradually become a part of the popular creed, though subsequently modified by the influence of Christianity, by the intermixture of classical associations, the prevalence of feudal manners, and other causes. Accordingly, we find Gervase of Tilbury, in the thirteenth century, detailing, in his "*Otia Imperialia*," many of the peculiar superstitions of the Scandinavian system as common to this country; and in the following age, Chaucer, impressed with the high antiquity of these fables, refers even to the age of Arthur as the period of their full dominion :—

" In old Dayes of the King Artour
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this Lond fulfilled of Faerie,
The Elf-Quene with hire jolie company
Daunsed full oft in many a greene mede,
This was the old opinion as I rede.
I speke of many hundred yeres agoe." ‡

After the death of Chaucer, indeed, who treated these beautiful credulities with a pleasant vein of ridicule, the fate of the Gothic System of Fairies seems to have been considerably different in two opposite quarters of our island; for, while in Scotland the original character of this mythology, and especially that of its harsher features, was closely preserved, it received in England, and principally through the medium of our great dramatic bard, a milder aspect, and a more fanciful and sportive texture. The dissimilarity thus resulting has been noticed by a late elegant tourist, who observes, that "the Scottish Fairy is described with more terrific attributes than are to be found in the traces of a belief in such beings in England;" § a remark which is corroborated by Mr. Scott, who, after noticing this stricter retention of the ancient character of the Gothic Fairy in North Britain, assigns two causes for its occurrence, the enmity of the Presbyterian clergy to this supposed "light infantry of Satan," and the aspect of the country, "as we should naturally attribute," he adds, "a less malicious disposition, and a less frightful appearance, to the fays who glide by moonlight through the oaks of Windsor, than to those who haunt the solitary heaths and lofty mountains of the North." ** In fact, while the English, through Shakspeare, seem chiefly to have adopted and improved that part of the Gothic Mythology which relates to the Bright or Benignant race of Fairies, the Scotch have, with few exceptions, received and fostered that wilder and more gloomy portion of the creed which develops the agency and disposition of the Swart or Malignant tribe. A short detail, therefore, of the two systems, as they appear to have existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if compared with the features of the Scandinavian Mytho-

* They are sometimes represented as coining the money which they conceal or guard, "*in pecunia abundant, quam cudunt ipsimet*."—Theophr. Philos. Sag. lib. i. p. 591. ed. Gen. 1658.

† Tholossani, lib. vii. cap. 14.

‡ Chaucer apud Chalmers, English Poets, vol. i. p. 51. col. 1.

§ Stoddart's Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland, vol. ii. p. 66.

** Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

logy which we have just enumerated, will exhaust the subject of our present enquiry, placing the sources of our popular superstitions on these topics, and the poetical embellishments of Shakspeare, in a perspicuous point of view.

Of the Scottish Elves, two kinds have been uniformly handed down by tradition, the Fair and the Swart, but both are alike represented as prone to evil, and analogous therefore to the Illar Norner, or Evil Fairies of the Scandinavians. They were also often termed the Good Neighbours or People, as a kind of deprecatory compliment, in order to soften and appease the malignancy of their temper. * In a rare treatise written towards the close of the seventeenth century, by Mr. Robert Kirk, minister at Aberfoill, and entitled, "The Nature and Actions of the Subterranean, and, for the most part, Invisible People, heretofore going under the Name of Elves, Faunes, and Fairies, or the lyke, etc. etc.," † a very curious detail is given of the Fairy Superstitions of Scotland, as they have prevailed in that country, from the earliest period to the year 1690, a work which we may safely take as our text and guide in delineating the character of the Scottish Fairy, as it existed in the days of Shakspeare.

To the gloomy and unhallowed nature and disposition of these North British Elves, Mr. Kirk bears the most unqualified testimony :—

"These Siths or Fairies," he observes, "they call Sleagh Maith, or the Good People, it would seem, to prevent the dint of their *ill* Attempts (for the Irish use to bless all they fear Harme of), and are said to be of a middle Nature betuixt Man and Angel, as were Dæmons thought to be of old ;—they are said to have no discernible Religion, Love, or Devotion towards God, the blessed Maker of all : they disappear whenever they hear his Name invocked, or the Name of Jesus, nor can they act ought at that Time after hearing of that sacred Name.—Some say their continual Sadnesse is because of their pendulous state, as uncertain what at the last Revolution will become of them, when they are locked up into ane unchangeable Condition ; and if they have any frolic Fitts of Mirth, 'tis as the constrained grinning of a Mort-head, or rather as acted on a stage, and moved by another, ther (than ?) cordially comeing of themselves." ‡

Of their dress and weapons he gives us the following account :—

"Their Apparell is like that of the People and Countrey under which they live : so are they seen to wear Plaids and variegated Garments in the Highlands of Scotland, and Suanochs therefore in Ireland." §—"Their Weapons are most what solid earthly Bodies, nothing of Iron, but much of Stone, like to yellow, soft Flint-spa, shaped like a barbed Arrow-head, but flung like a Dairt, with great force. These Armes (cut by Airt and Tools it seems beyond humane) have somewhat of the Nature of Thunderbolt subtilty, and mortally wounding the vital Parts without breaking the skin." **

This description of the weapons, garb, disposition, and nature of the Gaelic, Highland, or Scoto-Irish Fairies, equally applies to the more elegant race which haunted the cheerful and cultivated districts of Caledonia ; for Mr. Cromek, painting the character of the Scottish Lowland Fairies, from the popular belief of Nithsdale and Galloway, tinges it with the same fearful attributes and mischievous propensities.

* "Perhaps this epithet," says Mr. Scott, "is only one example, among many, of the extreme civility which the vulgar in Scotland use towards spirits of a dubious, or even a determinedly mischievous nature. The arch-fiend himself is often distinguished by the softened title of the "good-man." This epithet, so applied, must sound strange to a southern ear ; but, as the phrase bears various interpretations, according to the places where it is used, so, in the Scottish dialect, the *good man of such a place*, signifies the tenant, or life-renter, in opposition to the laird, or proprietor. Hence, the devil is termed the good-man, or tenant, of the infernal regions. There was anciently a practice in Scottish villages, of propitiating this infernal being, by leaving uncultivated a croft, or small inclosure, of the neighbouring grounds, which was called the *Good-man's croft*. By doing so, it was their unavowed, but obvious intention, to avert the rage of Satan from destroying their possessions."—*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

† Of this curious work, a hundred copies of which have lately been reprinted, the first title is termed, "An Essay on the Nature," etc. ; and the second "Secret Commonwealth ; or, A Treatise displaying the Chiefe Curiosities as they are in Use among diverse of the People of Scotland to this Day ;—Singularities for the most Part peculiar to that Nation." 4to. 1691.

‡ Kirk's Essay, p. 1. 7, 8, 9. reprint.

§ Ibid. p. 6.

** Ibid. p. 10.

"They were small of stature," he relates, "exquisitely shaped and proportioned; of a fair complexion, with long fleeces of yellow hair flowing over their shoulders, and tucked above their brows with combs of gold. A mantle of green cloth, inlaid with wild flowers, reached to their middle;—green pantaloons, buttoned with bobs of silk, and sandals of silver, formed their under dress. On their shoulders hung quivers of adder slough, stored with pernicious arrows; and bows, fashioned from the rib of a man, buried where three Lairds' lands meet, tipped with gold, ready bent for warfare, were slung by their sides. Thus accoutred they mounted on steeds, whose hoofs would not print the new plowed land, nor dash the dew from the cup of a hare-bell. They visited the flock, the folds, the fields of coming grain, and the habitations of men;—and woe to the mortal whose frailty threw him in their power!—A flight of arrows, tipped with deadly plagues, were poured into his folds; and nauseous weeds grew up in his pastures; his coming harvest was blighted with pernicious breath,—and whatever he had no longer prospered. These fatal shafts were formed of the bog reed, pointed with white field flint, and dipped in the dew of hemlock. They were shot into cattle with such magical dexterity that the smallest aperture could not be discovered, but by those deeply skilled in fairy warfare, and in the cure of elf-shooting. Cordials and potent charms are applied; the burning arrow is extracted, and instant recovery ensues. The fairies seem to have been much attached to particular places. A green hill;—an opening in a wood;—a burn just freeing itself from the Uplands, were kept sacred for revelry and festival. The Ward-law, an ever green hill in Dalswinton Barony, was, in olden days, a noted Fairy tryste. But the Fairy ring being converted into a pulpit, in the times of persecution, proscribed the revelry of unchristened feet. Lamentations of no earthly voices were heard for years around this beloved hill." *

The latter part of this quotation alludes to a very prominent part of Scottish fairy superstition, the haunts or habitations of the Elf-folk, and their court or Fairy-land, a species of fiction which, as we have seen, makes a striking figure in the Scandinavian mythology, and probably furnished Chaucer with his adventure of "Sir Thopas."† The local appropriation of Fairies, however, though common enough in England, has been more minutely marked and described in Scotland. Green hills, mountain-lakes, romantic glens, and inaccessible falls of water, were more peculiarly their favourite haunts, whilst the wilderness or forest wild was deemed the regular entrance to Elf-land or the Court of Faery.

"There be many Places," says Kirk, "called Fairie-hills, which the Mountain People think impious and dangerous to peel or discover, by taking earth or wood from them;" and, speaking in another place of their habitations, he adds, they "are called large and fair, and (unless at some odd occasions) unperceaveable by vulgar eyes, like Rachland and other enchanted Islands, having fir Lights, continual Lamps, and Fires, often seen without Fuel to sustain them," confirming the account by the instance of a female neighbour of his, who, being conveyed to Elf-land, "found the Place full of Light, without any Fountain or Lamp from whence it did spring."‡

"Lakes and pits, on the tops of mountains," remarks Dr. Leyden, were "regarded with a degree of superstitious horror, as the porches or entrances of the subterraneous habitations of the fairies; from which confused murmurs, the cries of children, moaning voices, the ringing of bells, and the sounds of musical instruments, are often supposed to be heard. Round these hills, the green fairy circles are believed to wind, in a spiral direction, till they reach the descent to the central cavern; so that, if the unwary traveller be benighted on the charmed ground, he is inevitably conducted, by an invisible power, to the fearful descent." §

That a similar partiality was shown by these fairy people to the site of secluded waterfalls, is recorded in the Statistical Account of Scotland, where the minister of Dumfries, after describing a Linn formed by the water of the Crichup, as inaccessible to real beings, observes, that it had anciently been "considered as the habitation of imaginary ones; and at the entrance into it there was a curious Cell or Cave, called the Elf's Kirk, where, according to the superstition of the times, the imaginary inhabitants of the Linn were supposed to hold their meetings." **

But independent of these numerous occasional residences of the fairy tribe, a

* Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, 8vo. 1810. p. 295, 296, 297.

† Vide Cant. Tales, apud Tyrwhitt, v. 13726.

‡ Essay, p. 5, 12, 18.

§ "Scenes of Infancy: descriptive of Teviotdale," 1st edit. 12mo. p. 161.

** Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xiii. p. 245.

firm belief in the existence of a fixed court, or Elf-land peculiarly so denominated, as the centre of their empire and the abode of their Queen, was so prevalent in Scotland, during the sixteenth century, as to have been acted upon in a court of justice. A woman named Alison Pearson having been convicted, on the 28th of May, 1586, of holding intercourse with and visiting the Queen of Elf-land; "for hanting and repairing," says the indictment, "with the gude neighbours, and Queene of Elfland, thir divers years by past, as she had confest; and that she had friends in that court, which were of her own blude, who had gude acquaintance of the Queene of Elfland—and that she was seven years ill handled in the Court of Elfland,"* and for this notable crime was the poor creature burnt to death!

When such was the credulity of a bench of judges, we need not wonder that Fairy Land had become a professed article of the poetical creed, and that Lindsay in 1560, and Montgomery in 1584, should allude to it as a subject of admitted notoriety: thus the former, in his "Complaynt of the Papingo," says

" Bot sen my spreit mon from my bodye go,
I recommend it to the Queene of Fary,
Eternally into her court to tarry
In wilderness amang the holtis hair ;"†

and the latter, in his "Flyting against Polwart," speaking of Hallow'een, tells us, that

" The king of Pharie and his court, with the elf queen,
With many elfish incubus was ridand that night."

According to the "Tale of the Young Tamlane," a poem in its original state coeval with the "Complaynt of Scotland," and on the authority of the "Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer," said also to be of considerable antiquity, Elf-land is represented as a terrestrial paradise, the opening of the road to which was in the desert

" Where living land was left behind ;"

it is described as a "bonny road" "that winds about the fernie brae," but the roaring of the sea is heard in the descent, and at length the traveller wades knee-deep through rivers of blood,

" For a' the blude that's shed on earth,
Rins thro' the springs o' that countrie ;" §

yet, when arrived, the land is full of pleasantness, a garden of the loveliest green, self-illuminated, and whose halls have roofs of beaten gold, and floors of purest chrystal.**

No spell, however, could bind the Fairies themselves to their own domain; an eternal restlessness seems to have been their doom;

"They remove," says Kirk, in a passage singularly curious, "to other Lodgings at the Beginning of each Quarter of the Year, so traversing till Doomsday, (being imputent and impotent of?) staying in one Place, and findiug some Ease by so purning (journeying) and changing Habitations. Their chamoelion-lyke Bodies swim in the Air near the Earth with Bag and Bagadge; and at such revolution of Time, SEERS, or MEN OF THE SECOND SIGHT, (Fœmales being seldome so qualified) have very terrifying Encounters with them, even on High Ways; who therefoir usually shune to travell abroad at these four Seasons of the Year, and thereby have made it a Custome to this day among the Scottish-Irish to keep Church duely evry first Sunday of the Quarter to sene or hallow themselves, their Corns and Cattell, from the Shots and Stealth of these wandering Tribes; and many of these superstitious People will not be seen in Church againe till the nixt Quarter begin, as if no Duty were to be learned or done by them, but all the use of Worship and Sermons were to save them from these Arrows that fly in the dark." ††

* Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

† Watson's Collection of Scots Poems, 1709, part iii. p. 12.

§ Thomas The Rhymer, part i. Scott's Minstrelsy.

†† Kirk's Essay on Fairies, p. 2, 3.

† Lindsay's Works, 1592, p. 222.;

** Tale of the Young Tamlane, Minstrelsy.

Beside these quarterly migrations, an annual procession of the Fairy Court was supposed to take place on Hallowe'en, to which we have alluded in a former part of this work, when describing the superstitions peculiar to certain periods of the year. A similar ceremony, though not upon so large a scale, was also believed, among the peasantry of Nithsdale, to occur at Roodsmass; * but the most common appearance of the Fairy in Scotland, as elsewhere, was conceived to be by moon-light, dancing in a circle, and leaving behind either a scorched, or a deep green, ringlet; nor was the period of noon-day scarcely deemed less dangerous than the noon of night; for, during both, the Fairies were imagined to exert a baneful power; in sleep, producing the oppression termed the Nightmare, † and, even at mid-day, weaving their pernicious spells, and subjecting to their power all who were tempted to repose on the rock, bank, hillock, or near the tree which they frequented.

Persons thus unfortunately situated, who had ventured within the fairy-circle after sunset, who had slept at noon upon a fairy-hill, or who, in an evil hour, had been devoted to the infernal powers, by the curses of a parent, were liable to be borne away to Elf-land for a period of seven years:—

“ Woe to the upland swain, who, wandering far,
The circle treads, beneath the evening star!
His feet the witch-grass green impels to run,
Full on the dark descent, he strives to shun;
Till, on the giddy brink, o'erpower'd by charms,
The Fairies clasp him, in unhallow'd arms,
Doom'd, with the crew of restless foot, to stray
The earth by night, the nether realms by day;
Till seven long years their dangerous circuit run,
And call the wretch to view this upper sun.” ‡

Pregnant and child-bed women were considered, as in Germany, peculiarly in danger of being stolen by the Fairies at noon-day, and various preventive charms were adopted against this abstraction. “The Tramontains to this day,” says Kirk, speaking of “Women yet alive, who tell they were taken away when in Child-bed to nurse Fairie Children,” “put bread, the Bible, or a piece of Iron, in Women's Bed when travelling, to save them from being thus stolen.” §

Of the capture and subjection of those who had been devoted by execration, several instances are related both by Scotch and English writers; ** but the most general mode of abstraction practised by the Elvish race, was that of stealing or

* A remarkable instance of the continuance of this superstition, even in the present day, is recorded by Mr. Cromek, to whom an old woman of Nithsdale gave the following detail, “with the artless simplicity of sure belief.” “I' the night afore Roodsmass,” said she, “I had trysted wi' a neeber lass, a Scots mile frae hame, to talk anent buying braws i' the fair: we had nae suttan lang aneath the haw-buss, till we heard the loud laugh of owk riding, wi' the jingling o' bridles, an' the clanking o' hoofs. We banged up, thinking they wad ryde owre us;—we kent nae but it was drunken fowk riding to the fair, i' the fore night. We glowred roun', an' sune saw it was the *Fairie fowk's Rade*. We covered down till they passed by. A leam o' light was dancing owre them, mair bonnie than moon-shine: they were a wee, wee fowk, wi' green scarfs on, butane that rade foremost, an' that ane was a gude deal larger than the lave, wi' bonnie lang hair bun' about wi' a strap, whilk glented lyke stars. They rade on braw wee whyte naigs, wi' unco lang swooping tails, an' manes hung wi' whistles that the win' played on. This an' their tongue whan they sang, was like the soun of a far awa Psalm. Marion an' me was in a brade lea fiel' whare they cam by us, a high hedge of hawtrees keep it them frae gaun through Johnie Corrie's corn;—but they lap a' owre't like sparrows, and gallop't into a greene knowe beyont it. We gade i' the morning to look at the tredded corn, but the fient a hoof mark was there, nor a blade broken.”—*Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, p. 298, 299.

† Vide *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and *Tyrwhitt's Note on Canterbury Tales*, v. 6457.

‡ *Leyden's Scenes of Infancy*, p. 24.

§ *Kirk's Essay on Fairies*, p. 5, 6.

** Thus Gervase of Tilbury tells us, that one Peter de Cabinam residing in a city of Catalonia, being teased by his daughter, wished in his passion, that the devil might take her, when she was instantly borne away. “About seven years afterwards, an inhabitant of the same city, passing by the mountain (adjacent to it), met a man who complained bitterly of the burthen he was constantly forced to bear. Upon enquiring the cause of his complaining, as he did not seem to carry any load, the man related, that he had been unwarily devoted to the spirits by an execration, and that they now employed him constantly as a vehicle of burden.” As a proof of his assertion, he added, that “the daughter of his fellow citizen was detained by the spirits, but that they were willing to restore her, if her father would come and demand her on the mountain. Peter de Cabinam, on being informed of this, ascended the mountain to a lake (on its summit), and, in the name of God, demanded his daughter; when a tall, thin, withered figure, with wandering eyes, and almost bereft of understanding, was wafted to him in a blast of wind.”—*Scott's Minstrelsy*.

exchanging children, and so commonly was this species of theft apprehended in the Highlands of Scotland, that it was customary to watch children until the christening was over, * under the idea, that the power of the Fairies, owing to the original corruption of human nature, was chiefly to be dreaded in the interval between birth and baptism. The Beings substituted for the healthy offspring of man were apparently idiots, monstrous and decrepid in their form, and defective in speech; and when the Fairies failed to purloin or exchange the infant, in consequence of the vigilance of its parents, it was usually found breath-blasted, "their unearthly breath making it wither away in every limb and lineament, like a blighted ear of corn, saving the countenance, which unchangeably retains the sacred stamp of divinity." †

The cause assigned for this evil propensity on the part of the Fairies, was the dreadful obligation they were under, of sacrificing the tenth individual to the Devil every, or every seventh year; "the teind of them," says the indictment of Alison Pearson, are tane to hell everie year, ‡ while the hero of the Ballad entitled *The Young Tamlane*, exclaims:—

" And pleasant is the Fairy land;
But, an eiry tale to tell!
Ay, at the end o' seven years,
We pay the teind to hell."

For the recovery of the unfortunate substitutes thus selected for the payment of their infernal tribute, various charms and contrivances were adopted, of which one of the most effectual, though the most horrible, was the assignment to the flames of the supposed changeling, which it was firmly believed would, in consequence of this treatment, disappear, and the real child return to the lap of its mother.

"A beautiful child, of Caerlaveroc, in Nithsdale," relates Mr. Cromek from tradition, "on the second day of its birth, and before its baptism, was changed, none knew how, for an antiquated elf of hideous aspect. It kept the family awake with its nightly yells; biting the mother's breasts, and would neither be cradled or nursed. The mother, obliged to be from home, left it in charge to the servant girl. The poor lass was sitting bemoaning herself,—'Wer't nae for thy gironing face I would knock the big, winnow the corn, and grun the meal!'—'Lowse the cradle band,' quoth the Elf, 'and tent the neighbours, an' Ill work yere wark.' Up started the elf, the wind arose, the corn was chaffed, the outlyers were foddered, the hand mill moved around, as by instinct, and the knocking mell did its work with amazing rapidity. The lass, and her elfin servant, rested and diverted themselves, till, on the mistress's approach, it was restored to the cradle, and began to yell anew. The girl took the first opportunity of slyly telling her mistress the adventure. 'What 'll we do wi' the wes diel?' said she. 'I'll wirk it a pirn,' replied the lass. At the middle hour of night the chimney-top was covered up, and every inlet barred and closed. The embers were blown up until glowing hot, and the maid, undressing the elf, tossed it on the fire. It uttered the wildest and most piercing yells, and, in a moment, the Fairies were heard moaning at every wonted avenue, and rattling at the window boards, at the chimney head, and at the door. 'In the name o' God bring back the bairn,' cried the lass. The window flew up; the earthly child was laid unharmed on the mother's lap, while its grisly substitute flew up the chimney with a loud laugh." §

Another efficacious mode of re-possessing either children or adults who had been borne away by the Fairies, depended upon watching their great annual procession or rade on Hallowe'en, within a year and a day of the supposed abstraction, and there seizing by force the hapless victim of their charms. This enterprise, however, which forms the chief incident in the "*Tale of the Young Tamlane*," and has been already mentioned, required much courage and resolution for its successful performance, as the adventurer, regardless of all the terrors of the scene, and of all the appalling shapes which the lost person was compelled to assume,

* See Pennant's *Tour in Scotland*, 8vo, 1769.

† Cromek on *Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, p. 307.

§ *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, p. 308, 309.

‡ *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*

had to hold him fast, under every transformation, and until the resources of fairy magic were exhausted. Thus Tamlane exclaims :

“ They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and a snake ;
But had me fast, let me not pass,
Gin ye wad be my maik.

They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
An adder and an ask ;
They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A bale * that burns fast.

They’ll turn me in your arms, Janet,
A red hot gad o’ iron ;
But had me fast, let me not pass,
For I’ll do you no harm.—

And next they’ll shape me in your arms,
A toad, but and an eel ;
But had me fast, nor let me gang,
As you do love me weel.

They’ll shape me in your arms, Janet,
A dove, but and a swan ;
And last they’ll shape me in your arms,
A mother-naked man :
Cast your green mantle over me—
I’ll be myself again.”—†

That part of the Scottish fairy system which relates exclusively to the abstraction of children, has been beautifully applied by Mr. Erskine, in one of his supplemental stanzas to Collins’s “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland,” p. 106.

Like the Dwerger or Swart-Elves of Scandinavia, the Scottish Fairies were also endowed with great mechanical powers ; were often mischievously, though sometimes beneficially, active in mines, and were believed to be the guardians of hidden treasure. “The Swart Fairy of the Mine,” says the Scotch Encyclopedia, “has scarce yet quitted our subterraneous works,”‡ and Kirk speaks of “Treasure hid in a Hill called Sith-bhruaich, or Fayrie-hill. § It is amusing, indeed, to read the minute account which this worthy minister gives of the habits and occupations of his Siths or Fairies : thus, with regard to their speech, food, and work, he informs us that “they speak by way of whistling, clear, not rough”—“some are fed by only sucking into some fine spirituous Liquors, that peirce lyke pure Air and Oyl : others feid more gross on the Foyson or Substance of Corns and Liquors, or Corn itselfe that grows on the Surface of the Earth, which those Fairies steall away, partly invisible, partly preying on the Grain, as do Crowes and Mice :—their Food being exactly clean, and served up by pleasant children, lyke enchanted Puppets.” “They are sometimes heard to bake Bread, strike Hammers, and to do such lyke Services within the litle Hillocks they most haunt.—Ther Women are said to Spine very fine, to Dy, to Tossue and Embroyder : but whither it be as manuell Operation of substantiall refined Stuffs, with apt and solid Instruments, or only curious Cobwebs, impalpable Rainbows, and a phantastic Imitation of the actions of more terrestriall Mortalls, since it transcended all the Senses of the Seere to discern whither, I leave to conjecture as I found it.”**

It appears, also, from the same author, that the operations of the Fairies were considered as predictive of future events, and that those who were gifted with the privilege of beholding the process, formed their inferences accordingly. Of this he gives us the following singularly terrific instance :—

“Thus a Man of the Second Sight, perceaving the Operations of these forecasting invisible People among us, (indulged thorow a stupendious Providence to give Warnings of some remarkable Events, either in the Air, Earth, or Waters) told he saw a Winding-shroud creeping on a walking healthful Persons Legs till it come to the Knee, and afterwards it come up to the Midle, then to the Shoulders, and at last over the Head, which was visible to no other Persone. And by observing the spaces of Time betwixt the severall Stages, he easily guess’d how long the Man was to live who wore the Shroud ; for when it approached his Head, he told that such a Person was ripe for the Grave.” ††

Among the Scottish Fairies we must not forget to enumerate the Wee Brown

* *Bale*.—A Faggot.

‡ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in verbo.

** *Essay on Fairies*, p. 1, 5, 7.

† *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

§ *Essay on Fairies*, p. 12.

†† *Ibid.* p. 11, 12.

Man of the Muirs, "a fairy," says Dr. Leyden, "of the most malignant order, the genuine duergar," * who dwelt beneath the heather bell, and whose favourite amusement it was to extract the brains from the skulls of those who slept within the verge of his power. †

It is evident from the account now given of the Scottish Fairies, that they assimilate, in a very striking degree, in manners, disposition, and origin, with the Duergar or Swart tribe of the Scandick Elves; but that a peculiarly wild, and even terrific malignancy forms and distinguishes their character and agency, ascribable, in a great measure, to the intermixture of a severe Christian theology, which attributes to these poetical little beings a species of demoniacal nature. It is also not less remarkable, that the only friendly and benignant Elf in the fairy annals of North Britain, though founded, in some respects, on the domestic fairy of Germany, and still more nearly assimilated to the Portunus, and the spirit Grant of Gervase of Tilbury, possesses some features altogether peculiar to the country of its birth. Kirk, among his "fyve Curiosities in Scotland, not much observed elsewhere," ‡ reckons, in the first place, "the Brounies, who in some Families are Drudges, clean the Houses and Dishes after all go to Bed, taking with him his Portion of Food, and removing before Day-break." §

Of this singular race there appears to have been two kinds, a diminutive and a gigantic species. King James, in his *Dæmonology*, published in 1597, tells us, that "the spirit called Brownie, appeared like a rough man, and haunted divers houses without doing any evill, but doing as it were necessarie turnes up and downe the house; yet some were so blinded as to beleve that their house was all the sonsier, as they called it, that such spirits resorted there;"** and Martin, speaking of the Isles of Shetland, remarks, that "a spirit, by the country people called Brownie, was frequently seen in all the most considerable Families in these Isles and North of Scotland, in the shape of a tall Man." †† To this description of Brownie, Milton seems to have been indebted for his "drudging Goblin:"—

—————"the lubbar-fiend,
'Who' stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength."

But the most common tradition with regard to the Brownie is, that, in point of size, he was similar to the Fairy, though in his habits, temper, and equipment, widely different. He possessed neither the weapons nor the hostile inclinations of his brother Elves; he despised their gay attire, but was notorious for an attachment to dainty food, being the guardian of the Dairy, the avowed protector of the Bee, and a constant sharer in the product of its industry. He loved to lurk in hollow trees during the day, or in the recesses of some old mansion, to the family of which he would attach himself for centuries, and perform, for the menials, during the night, the most laborious offices.

The most ample and interesting account of this kind-hearted elf has been given

* See Scott's *Minstrelsy*.

† "Brown dwarf, that o'er the muir-land strays,
Thy name to Keeldar tell."

"The Brown Man of the Muirs, who stays
Beaeath the heather bell."—*Scott's Minstrelsy*.

Walsingham, says Dr. Leyden, mentions a story of an unfortunate youth, whose brains were extracted from his skull, during his sleep, by this malicious being. P. 356.

‡ Essay on Fairies, p. 37.

§ Kirk, after mentioning as his fifth curiosity, "A being Proof of Lead, Iron, and Silver," adds the following curious notice of the strong attachment of the Scotch to music. "Our Northern-Scotch, and our Athole Men are so much addicted to and delighted with Harps and Music, as if, like King Saul, they were possessed with a forrein Spirit, only with this Difference, that Music, did put Saul's Play-fellow a sleep, but roused and awaked our Men, vanquishing their own Spirits at Pleasure, as if they were impotent of its Powers, and unable to command it; for wee have seen some poor Beggars of them, chattering their Teeth for Cold, that how soon they saw the Fire, and heard the Harp, leapt throw the House like Goats and Satyrs." P. 37, 38.

** The Workes of King James, folio, 1616, p. 127.

†† Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, p. 334.

to us, from tradition, by Mr. Cromek, who describes the Scotch Brownie as "small of stature, covered with short curly hair, with brown matted locks, and a brown mantle which reached to the knee, with a hood of the same colour." After having finished his nightly work, which was usually done by the crowing of the first cock, he would then, relates Mr. Cromek,

"Come into the farm-hall, and stretch itself out by the chimney, sweaty, dusty, and fatigued. It would take up the pluff, (a piece of bored bour-tree for blowing up the fire) and, stirring out the red embers, turn itself till it was rested and dried. A choice bowl of sweet cream, with combs of honey, was set in an accessible place: this was given as its hire; and it was willing to be bribed, though none durst avow the intention of the gift. When offered meat or drink, the Brownie instantly departed, bewailing and lamenting itself, as if unwilling to leave a place so long its habitation, from which nothing but the superior power of fate could sever it. A thrifty good wife, having made a web of linsey-woolsey, sewed a well-lined mantle, and a comfortable hood, for her trusty Crownie. She laid it down in one of his favourite haunts, and cried to him to array himself. Being commissioned by the gods to relieve mankind under the drudgery of original sin, he was forbidden to accept of wages or bribes. He instantly departed, bemoaning himself in a rhyme, which tradition has faithfully preserved:—

" A new mantle, and a new hood! —
Poor Brownie! ye'll ne'er do mair gude!"

"The prosperity of the family seemed to depend on them, and was at their disposal.—A place, called Liethin Hall, in Dumfriesshire, was the hereditary dwelling of a noted Brownie. He had lived there, as he once communicated, in confidence, to an old woman, for three hundred years. He appeared only once to every new master, and, indeed, seldom showed more than his hand to any one. On the decease of a beloved master, he was heard to make moan, and would not partake of his wonted delicacies for many days. The heir of the land arrived from foreign parts, and took possession of his father's inheritance. The faithful Brownie showed himself, and proffered homage. The spruce Laird was offended to see such a famine-faced, wrinkled domestic, and ordered him meat and deink, with a new suit of clean livery. The Brownie departed, repeating aloud and frequently these ruin-boding lines:—

" Ca, cuttie, ca!
A' the luck o' Liethin Ha'
Gangs wi' me to Bodsbeck Ha.'"

"Liethin Ha' was, in a few years, in ruins, and 'bonnie Bodsbeck' flourished under the luck-bringing patronage of the Brownie.—

"One of them, in the olden times, lived with Maxwell, Laird of Dalswinton, doing ten men's work, and keeping the servants awake at nights with the noisy dirling of its elfin flail. The Laird's daughter, says tradition, was the comeliest dame in all the holms of Nithsdale. To her the Brownie was much attached: he assisted her in love intrigue, conveying her from her high-tower chamber to the trysting-thorn in the woods and back again, with such light-heeled celerity, that neither bird, dog, nor servant awoke.

"He undressed her for the matrimonial bed, and served her so handmaiden-like, that her female attendant had nothing to do, not daring even to finger her mistress's apparel, lest she should provoke the Brownie's resentment. When the pangs of the mother seized his beloved lady, a servant was ordered to fetch the 'cannie wife,' who lived across the Nith. The night was dark as a December night could be; and the wind was heavy among the groves of oak. The Brownie, enraged at the loitering serving-man, wrapped himself in his lady's fur-cloak; and, though the Nith was foaming high-flood, his steed, impelled by supernatural spur and whip, passed it like an arrow. Mounting the dame behind him, he took the deep water back again, to the amazement of the worthy woman, who beheld the red waves tumbling around her, yet the steed's foot-locks were dry, 'Ride nae by the auld pool,' quo' she, 'lest we should meet wi' Brownie.'—He replied, 'Fear nae, dame, ye've met a' the Brownies ye will meet.—Placing her down at the hall gate, he hastened to the stable, where the servant-lad was just pulling on his boots; he unbuckled the bridle from his steed, and gave him a most afflicting drubbing.—

"The Brownie, though of a docile disposition, was not without its pranks and merriment. The Abbey-lands, in the parish of New Abbey, were the residence of a very sportive one. He loved to be, betimes, somewhat mischievous.—Two lasses, having made a fine bowlful of buttered brose, had taken it into the byre to sup, while it was yet dark. In the haste of concealment, they had brought but one spoon; so they placed the bowl between them, and took a spoonful by turns. 'I hae got but three sups,' cried the one, 'an it's a' done!'" 'It's a' done, indeed,' cried the other.

‘Ha, ha!’ laughed a third voice, ‘Brownie has gotten the maist o’t.’ He had judiciously placed himself between them, and got the spoon twice for their once.” *

The character and leading features of this benevolent Fairy, have been concentrated in the following beautiful stanza by Mr. Erskine, who, in supplying the omissions of Collins, thus supposes himself addressing the friend of that exquisite poet:—

“ — See! recall’d by thy resistless lay,
Once more the *Brownie* shews his honest face.
Hail, from thy wanderings long, my much lov’d sprite,
Thou friend, thou lover of the lowly, hail!
Tell in what realms thou sport’st thy merry night,
Trail’st thy long mop, or whirl’st the mimic flail,
Where dost thou deck the much-disordered hall,
While the tired damsel in Elysium sleeps,
With early voice to drowsy workman call,
Or lull the dame while mirth his vigils keeps?
’Twas thus in Caledonia’s domes, ’tis said,
Thou ply’dst the kindly task in years of yore:
At last, in luckless hour, some erring maid
Spread in thy nightly cell of viands store:
Ne’er was thy form beheld among their mountains more.” †

From the thirteenth to the close of the sixteenth century, the “Fairy Mythology of England,” being derived from the same sources, and through the same medium as the Scottish System, which we have just delineated, the outlines of both will be found very similar. Thus in Gervase of Tilbury, in Chaucer, Lydgate, etc., even, with the exception of Spenser, down to R. Scot and Warner, whose “Albion’s England” was printed, though not published, in 1586, the same ideas of fairy-land, the same infernal origin, and variety of species, the same mischievous and terrific character, and occasionally the same frolic and capricious wantonness, as the property of one particular genus, may be readily detected.‡ But in 1593, when the *Midsummer-Night’s Dream* was presented to the public, nearly the whole of this Mythology which, as founded on the Scandick superstitions, had been, though with a few modifications, so long prevalent both in England and Scotland, seems to have received such vast additions from the plastic imagination of our bard, as, though rebuilt on the traditions of the “olden time,” justly to merit, by their novelty and poetic beauty, the title of the English System, in contradistinction to that which still lingers in the wilds of Scotland.

The Fairies of Shakspeare have been truly denominated the favourite children of his romantic fancy, and, perhaps, in no part of his works has he exhibited a more creative and visionary pencil, or a finer tone of enthusiasm, than in bodying forth “these airy nothings,” and in giving them, in brighter and ever-durable tints, once more

“ A local habitation and a name.”

Of his unlimited sway over this delightful world of ideal forms, no stronger proof can be given, than that he has imparted an entire new cast of character to the beings whom he has evoked from its bosom, purposely omitting the darker shades of their character, and, whilst throwing round them a flood of light, playful, yet exquisitely soft and tender, endowing them with the moral attributes of purity and benevolence. In fact, he not only dismisses altogether the fairies of a malignant nature, but clothes the milder yet mixed tribe of his predecessors

* Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, p. 330, 331, et seq.

† Collins’s *Poems*, Sharpe’s edition, p. 105.

‡ That Warner’s *Fairy-land* was in the infernal regions, is sufficiently proved from the following lines:—

“The *Elves*, and *Fairies*, taking fists,
Did hop a merrie round:
And *Cerberus* had lap enough:
And *Charon* leasure found.”— *Chalmers’s English Poets*, vol. iv. p. 458.

with a more fascinating sportiveness, and with a much larger share of unalloyed goodness.

The distinction between the two species he has accurately marked where Puck, under some apprehension, observes to Oberon, that the night is waning fast, that Aurora's harbinger appears, and that the "damned spirits all" are flitting to their beds, adding, that

"For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night;"

to which Oberon immediately replies,—

"But we are spirits of another sort :
I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams." Act iii. sc. 2.

Of the originality of Shakspeare in the delineation of this tribe of spirits, or Fairies, nothing more is required in proof, than a combination or grouping of the principal features; a picture which, when contrasted with the Scandick system and that which had been built upon it in England and Scotland previous to his own time, will sufficiently show with what grace, amenity, and beauty, and with what an exuberant store of novel imagery, he has decorated these phantoms of the Gothic mythology.

The King and Queen of Faiery, who, in Chaucer, are identified with the Pluto and Proserpina of hell,* are, under the appellations of Oberon and Titania,† drawn by Shakspeare in a very amiable and pleasing light; for, though jealous of each other, they are represented as usually employed in alleviating the distresses of the worthy and unfortunate. Their benign influence, indeed, seems to have extended over the physical powers of nature; for Titania tells her Lord, that, in consequence of their jealous brawls, a strange distemperature had seized the elements :—

"The seasons alter ; hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;
And on old Hyem's chin, and icy crown,
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries ; and the 'mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which :
And this same progeny of evils comes,
From our debate, from our dissention ;
We are their parents and original." Act ii. sc. 2.

It appears even that the fairy-practice of purloining children, which, in every previous system of this mythology, had been carried on from malignant or self-interested motives, was in Titania the result of humanity and compassion : thus when Oberon begs her "little changeling boy" to be his henchman, she answers—

"————— Set your heart at rest,
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order :
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side ;
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,

* The Marchantes Tale, vide Chalmers's English Poets, vol. i. p. 77, col. 1, p. 78, col. 2.

† Oberon, or, more properly Auberon, has been derived, by some antiquaries, from "*l'aube du jour*;" and Mab his Queen, from *amabilis*, so that *lucidity* and *amiability*, their characteristics, as delineated by Shakspeare, may be traced in their names.

Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;
 When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive,
 And grow big-bellied, with the wanton wind :
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
 (Following her womb, then rich with my young squire)
 Would imitate; and sail upon the land,
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandize.
 But she being mortal, of that boy did die :
 And, for her sake, I do rear up her boy :
 And, for her sake, I will not part with him." Act ii. sc. 2.

The expression in this passage "being mortal," as applied to the changeling's mother, in contradistinction to the unchangeable state of the Fairies, may be added to Mr. Ritson's instances, * as another decisive proof of the immortality of Shakspeare's elves; but when that commentator asserts, that the Fairies of the common people "were never esteemed otherwise," he has gone too far, at least if he meant to include the people of Scotland; for Kirk expressly tells us, that the Scottish Fairies are mortal: "they are not subject," he remarks, "to sore Sicknesses, but dwindle and decay at a certain Period, all about ane Age;" and still more decidedly has he remarked their destiny, in answer to the question, "at what Period of Time do they die?"—"They are," he replies, "of more refyn'd Bodies and Intellectualls then wee, and of far less heavy and corruptive Humours (which cause a Dissolution), yet many of their Lives being dissonant to right Reason and their own Laws, and their Vehicles not being wholly free of Lust and Passion, especially of the more spirituall and hautie Sins, they pass (after a long healthy Lyfe) into ane Orb and Receptacle fitted for their Degree, till they come under the general Cognizance of the last Day." †

Like the Lios-alfar or Bright Elves of the Goths, the Fairies of Shakspeare delighted in conferring blessings, in prospering the household, and in rendering the offspring of virtuous love, fortunate, fair, and free from blemish: thus the first fruit of the re-union of Oberon and Titania, is a benediction on the house of Theseus :

"Now thou and I are new in amity;
 And will to-morrow midnight, solemnly,
 Dance in duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
 And bless it to all fair posterity; Act iv. sc. 1.

an intention which is carried into execution at the close of the play, where this kind and gentle race, entering the mansion at midnight—

"Hand in hand, with fairy grace,"—

receive the following directions from their benevolent monarch:—

"Now, until the break of day,
 Through this house each fairy stray," &c. Act v. sc. 2.

How different this from the conduct and disposition of their brother elves of Scotland, of whom Kirk tells us, that "they are ever readiest to go on hurtfull Errands, but seldom will be the Messengers of great Good to Men." ‡

But not only were the Fairies of our bard the friends and protectors of virtue, they were also the punishers of guilt and sensuality; and, contrary to the then commonly entertained ideas of their infernal origin, and anti-christian habits, were the avowed patrons of piety and prayer: "Go you," exclaims the personifier of one of these tiny moralists, addressing his companions, "black, grey, green and white,"

—————"Go— and where you find a maid,
 That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,

* The Quip Modest, 8vo, 1783, p. 12.

‡ Essay on Fairies, p. 7, 8.

† Essay on Fairies, p. 8, and p. 44.

Raise up the organs of her fantasy,
 Sleep she as sound as careless infancy;
 But those as sleep, and think not on their sins,
 Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and shins—
 But, stay; I smell a man of middle earth:—
 With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:
 If he be chaste, the flame will back descend,
 And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
 It is the flesh of a corrupted heart:”

on the proof of his iniquity, they proceed to punishment, pinching him, and singing in scorn,

“ Fye on sinful fantasy!

Fye on lust and luxury!” &c.—*Merry Wives of Windsor*. Act v. sc. 5.

This love of virtue, and abhorrence of sin, were, as attributes of the Fairies, in a great measure, if not altogether, the gifts of Shakspeare, at least we regard their mythology at that time prevalent in Britain, whether we refer to the Scottish system, or to that which existed among our own poets from Chaucer to Warner, though our familiarity with the picture is now such, owing to the popularity of the original artist and the consequent number of his copyists on the same subject, that we assign it a date much anterior to its real source.

If the moral and benevolent character of these children of fancy be, in a great degree, the creation of Shakspeare, the imagery which he has employed in describing their persons, manners, and occupations, will be deemed not less his peculiar offspring, nor inferior in beauty, novelty, and wildness of painting, to that which the magic of his pencil has diffused over every other part of his visionary world. Thus, in imparting to us an idea of the diminutive size of his Fairies, with what picturesque minutiae has he marked his sketch! Speaking of the altercation between Oberon and Titania, he mentions, as one of its results, that

————— “ all their elves, for fear,
 Creep into acorn cups, and hide them there:” *

and he delineates Ariel as sleeping in a cowslip's bell, as living merrily “ under the blossom that hangs on the bough,” and flying after summer mounted on the back of the bat. †

In accordance with this smallness of stature, are all their accompaniments and employments contrived, with the most admirable proportion and the most vivid imagination. Their dress tinted “ green and white,” ‡ is constructed of the “ wings of rear-mice,” § and their wrappers of the “ snake's enamelled skin;” ** the pensioners of this queen are “ the cowlips tall;” †† her lackeys, Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed; ‡‡ her lamps the green lustre of the glow-worm; §§ and her quipage, one of the most exquisite pictures of frolic imagination, is thus minutely drawn:

“ O, then, I see, queen Mab hath been with you.

She comes

In shape no bigger than an agate stone

On the fore-finger of an alderman,” &c. ***

Of the various occupations and amusements assigned to the Fairies, the most constant which tradition has preserved, has been that of dancing at midnight, hand in hand in a circle, a diversion common to every system of this mythology, but which Shakspeare perhaps first described with graphic precision. The scenery selected for this sport, in which—

* *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 1.

† *Merry Wives of Windsor*, act v. sc. 5.

** Act ii. sc. 2.

†† Act iii. sc. 1.

*** *Romeo and Juliet*, act i. sc. 4.

† *Tempest*, act v. sc. 1.

§ *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 3.

†† Act ii. sc. 1.

§§ Act iii. sc. 1.

“ To dance their ringlets to the whistling wind,”
was, we are told by Titania,

— “ on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea,” *

and the light of the moon was a necessary adjunct to their festivity, —

“ Ye elves ——— you demy puppets, that
By moon-shine do the green-sour ringlets make
Whereof the ewe not bites.” †

These ringlets, the consequence of the fairy footing, our author has particularly noticed in the following lines, adding some striking imagery on the use to which flowers were applied by this sprightly race: —

— “ Nightly, meadow-fairies, look, you sing,
Like to the Garter’s compass, in a ring :
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see ;
And, Hony soit qni mal y pense, write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white ;
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knight-hoods bending knee :
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.” ‡

To preserve the freshness and verdure of these ringlets by supplying them with moisture, was one of the occupations of Titania’s train : thus a fairy in her service is represented as telling Puck—

“ I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon’s sphere ;
And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.” §

The general amusements of the tribe, independent of their moonlight dance, are very impressively and characteristically enumerated in the subsequent lines:—

“ Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves ;
And ye, that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him,
When he comes back ;—and you, whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms ; that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew.” **

But the most astonishing display of the sportive and illimitable fancy of our poet on this subject, will be found in the ministration and offices ascribed to those

* *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, act ii. sc. 2.

† *Tempest*, act v. sc. 1.—Thus Milton, in conformity with these passages, describes his fairy night-scene:—

— “ Faery elves,
Whose midnight revels, by a forest side,
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course; they, on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear,”

Todd’s *Milton*, 2d edit. vol. ii. p. 368, 369.

The music here alluded to is beautifully described, as an accompaniment of the Scottish Fairies, in Sir John Sinclair’s *Statistical Account of Scotland*:—“ Notwithstanding the progressive increase of knowledge, and proportional decay of superstition in the Highlands, these genii are still supposed by many of the people to exist in the woods and sequestered valleys of the mountains, where they frequently appear to the lonely traveller, clothed in green, with dishevelled hair floating over their shoulders, and with faces more blooming than the vermeil blush of a summer morning. At night in particular, when fancy assimilates to its own preconceived ideas, every appearance, and every sound, the wandering enthusiast is frequently entertained by their music, more melodious than he ever before heard.” Vol. xii. p. 162. note.

‡ *Merry Wives of Windsor*, act v. sc. 5.

§ *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, act ii. sc. 1.

** *Tempest*, act v. sc. 1.

Fairies who are employed about the person, or executing the mandates, of their Queen. It appears to have been the business of one of her retinue to attend to the decoration of her majesty's pensioners, the cowlips tall;

" In their gold coats spots you see ;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours :
*I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.*" *

Another duty, not less important, was to lull their mistress asleep on the bosom of a violet or a musk-rose : —

" I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows ;
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine :
There sleeps Titania, some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight." Act ii. sc. 2.

And again, with still greater wildness of imagination, but with the utmost propriety and adaptation of imagery, are they drawn in the performance of similar functions : —

" *Titania.* Come, now a roundel and a fairy song ;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds ;
Some, war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats ; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our quaint spirits : *sing me now asleep :*
Then to your offices, and let me rest."

The song is equally in character, as it forbids, in admirable adherence to poetical truth and consistency, the approach of every insect or reptile, that might be deemed likely to annoy the repose of such a delicate and diminutive being, while Philomel is invoked to add her delicious chaunt to the soothing melody of fairy voices : —

" *I Fai.* You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen :
Newts, and blindworms, do not wrong ;
Come not near our fairy queen : " &c. Act ii. sc. 3.

This scene, beautiful and appropriate as it is, is yet surpassed, in originality and playfulness of fancy, by the passage in which Titania gives directions to her attendants for their conduct to Bottom, to whom she had previously offered their assistance, promising that they should fetch him "jewels from the deep:"

" Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricots, and dewberries," &c. Act iii. sc. 1.

The working of Oberon's enchantment on Titania, who "straightway lov'd an ass," and led him to "her close and consecrated bower," and the interview between Bottom, her fairy majesty, and her train, though connected with so many supernatural imaginings, have been transferred to the canvas by Fuseli with a felicity which has embodied the very thoughts of Shakspeare, and which may on this subject be said to have placed the genius of the painter almost on a level with that of the poet, so wonderfully has he fixed the illusive creations of his great original.

To this detail of fairy occupation, must be added another feature, on which Shakspeare has particularly dwelt, namely, the attention of the tribe to cleanliness: thus Puck, on entering the palace of Theseus, exclaims, —

" ————— Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house :

* *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act ii. sc. 1.

*I am sent, with broom, before,
To sweep the dust behind the door."*

Act v. sc. 2.

and similar care and neatness are enjoined the elves who haunt the towers of Windsor:—

" ——— About, about;
Search Windsor castle, elves, within and out:
Strew good luck, oushes, on every sacred room;—
*The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm, and every precious flower.**

No one could aspire to the favour and protection of the Fairies who was slovenly or personally impure; punishment, indeed, awaited all who thus offended; even the majesty of Mab herself condescended

"To bake the elf-locks in foul sluttish hair;" †

and Cricket, the fairy, being sent on a mission to the chimnies of Windsor, receives the following injunction:—

"Where fires thou find'st unraked, and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
Our radiant queen hates sluts, and sluttery."

In order to complete the picture of fairy superstition, as given us by Shakspeare, it remains to consider his description of Puck or Robin Good-fellow, the confidential servant of Oberon, an elf or incubus of a mixed and very peculiar character. This quaint, frolicsome, and often mischievous sprite, seems to have been compounded of the qualities ascribed by Gervase of Tilbury to his Goblin Grant, and to his *Portuni*, two species of demons whom he describes, both in name and character, as denizens of England; of the benevolent propensities attributed by Agricola to the Guteli, Cobali, or Brownies of Germany, and of additional features and powers, the gift and creation of our bard.

A large portion of these descriptions of the German writers, and of his countryman Gervase, Shakspeare would find in Reginald Scot, and from their union with the product of his own fancy, has arisen the Puck of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, a curious amalgamation of the fairy, the brownie, and the hobgoblin, whom Burton calls "a bigger kind of fairy." ‡ Scot's vocabulary of the fairy tribe is singularly copious, including not less than nine or ten appellations which have been bestowed, with more or less propriety, on this Proteus of the Gothic elves.—"In our childhood," he observes, "our mothers' maids have so terrified us with—bull-beggars, spirits, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit with the cansticke, dwarfes, imps, nymphes, changlings, incubus, Robin Good-fellowe, the spoone, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell waine, the fier drake, the puckle Tom thombe, hob goblin, Tom tumbler, boneless, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne shadowes." §

It is remarkable, however, that the Puck of Shakspeare is introduced by a term not found in this catalogue:—"Farewell, thou Lob of Spirits," says the fairy to him in their first interview,—a title which, as we shall perceive hereafter, could not be meant to imply, as Dr. Johnson supposed, either inactivity of body or

* Merry Wives of Windsor, act. v. sc. 5.

† Romeo and Juliet, act. i, sc. 4.

‡ Burton's account of the Fairies, first published in 1617, is given with his usual erudition, and the part alluded to in the text, proceeds thus:—"A bigger kind there is of them (fairies), called with us Hobgoblins, and Robin Good fellows, that would in those superstitious times, grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work. They would mend old Irons in those Æolian Isles of Lypara, in former ages, and have been often seen and heard. Tholosanus calls them Trullos and Getulos, and saith, that in his dayes they were common in many places of France. Dithmarus Bleskenius, in his description of Island, reports for a certainty, that almost in every family they have yet some such familiar spirits; and Fœlix Malleolus in his book de Crudel. Dæmon, affirms as much, that these Trolli or Telchines are very common in Norway, and seen to do drudgery work, to draw water, saith Wierus, lib. i. cap. 32, dress meat or any such thing." Anatomie of Melancholy, fol. 7th edit., 1676, p. 29, col. 1.

§ The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to, 1584, p. 152, 153.

dulness of mind, for Puck was occasionally swifter than the wind, and notorious, as the immediately subsequent passage informs us, for his shrewdness and ingenuity:—

“ Either I mistake your shape and making quite,”

says the fairy, after bestowing the above title,

“ Or else you are that *shrewd* and knavish sprite,
Call'd Robin Good-fellow;”

and then proceeds to characterise him by the peculiarity of his functions:—

“ Are you not he,
That fright the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are you not he?”

an interrogatory to which he replies in the following terms:

“ Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,” &c. Act ii. sc. 1.

The greater part of these frolicks may be traced in Gervase of Tilbury, Agricola, and Scot: the “misleading night-wanderers,” for instance, “laughing at their harm,” and “neighing in likeness of a filly foal,” feats which Puck afterwards thus again enumerates,—

“ I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier;
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.”—

are expressly attributed by Gervase to the goblins whom he has termed *Grant* and *Portuni*:—“*Est in Anglia quoddam dæmonum genus, quod suo idiomate Grant nominant adinstar pulli equini anniculi, tibiis erectum oculis scintillantibus,*” etc.—“*Cum—inter ambiguas noctis tenebras Angli solitarii quandoque equitant, Portunus nonnunquam invisus equitanti sese copulat, et cum diutius comitatur euntem, tandem loris arreptis equum in latum ad manum ducit, in quo dum infixos volutatur, portunus exiens cachinnum facit, et sic hujuscemodi ludibrio humanam simplicitatem deridet.*” *

The domestic offices and drudgery which Puck delighted to perform for his favourites, are mentioned by Lavaterus as belonging to his Fairies of the Earth; by Agricola to his *Cobali* and *Guteli*, and by Scot to his *Incubi* and *Virunculi*. Thus the first of these writers observes, in the words of the English translation of 1572, that

“ Men imagine there be certayne elves or fairies of the earth, and tell many straunge and marvellous tales of them, which they have heard of their grandmothers and mothers, howe they *have appeared unto those of the house, have done service, have rocked the cradell,* and (which is a signe of good luck) *do continually tary in the house;*† and he subsequently gives us from Agricola the following passage:—“*There be some (demons) very mild and gentle, whome some of the Germans call Cobali, as the Grecians do, because they be as it were apes and counterfeits of men: for they leaping, and skipping for joy do laughe, and sæme as though they did many things, when in very dæde they doo nothing.—Some other call them Elves;—they are not much*

* Vide de *Otiis Imperialibus*, dec. iii. cap. 61, 62.

† Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, 4to, 1572, p. 49.

unlike unto those whom the Germans call Guteli, bycause they sãme to beare good affection towards men, for they keepe horses, and do other necessary businesse." *

The resemblance which these descriptions bear both to the Brownie of the Scotch and the Puck of Shakspeare are very evident: but the combination and similitude are rendered still more apparent in the words of Scot; the

"Virunculi terrei," says he, "are such as was Robin good fellowe, that would supplie the office of servants, speciallie of maids; as to make a fier in the morning, sweepe the house, grind mustard and malt, drawe water, &c.;" † and speaking of the *Incubus*, he adds:—"In deede your grandams maides were wont to set a boll of milke before him and his cousine Robin good-fellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and sweeping the house at midnight: and you have also heard that *he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or goodwife of the house, having compassion on his nakednesse, laid anie clothes for him, besides his messe of white bread and milke, which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith; What have we here? Hemten, hamten, here will I never more tread nor stampen.*" ‡

The lines in italics point out one of the most characteristic features of the Brownie, while the preceding parts, and the last word of the quotation, are in unison, both with the passages just transcribed from our poet, and with that expression of Puck, where, describing to Oberon the terror and dispersion of the rustic comedians, he says—

"And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls."

It may be also remarked, the idea of fixing "an ass's nowl" on Bottom's head, is most probably taken from Scot, who gives us a very curious receipt for this singular metamorphosis. §

So far, then, the Puck of Shakspeare is in conformity with the tales of tradition, and of preceding writers; he is the "Goblin fear'd in field and town;" ** who loves all things best "that befall preposterously," and who, even when the poet wrote, had not ceased to excite apprehension; for Scot hath told us, nine years before the era of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, that Robin Good-fellowe ceaseth now to be much feared. ††

But to these traits of customary character, Shakspeare has added some which greatly modify the picture, and which have united to the "drudging goblin," and to the demon of mischievous frolic, duties and functions of a very different cast. He is the messenger, ‡‡ and trusty servant §§ of the fairy king, by whom, in these capacities, he is called gentle *** and good, ††† and he combines with all his hereditary attributes, the speed, the legerity, and the intellectual skill of the highest order of the fairy world. Accordingly when Oberon says—

"Fetch me this herb: and be thou here again,
Ere the leviathan can swim a league;"

he replies,

"I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes;"

Act ii. sc. 2.

* Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, 4to, 1752, p. 75.

† Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to, 1584, p. 521.

‡ Discoverie, p. 85.

§ "Cut of the head of a horse or an asse (before they be dead), otherwise the vertue or strength thereof will be the lesse effectually, and make an earthen vessell of fit capacitie to containe the same, and let it be filled with the oile and fat thereof; cover it close, and dawbe it over with lome: let it boile over a soft fier three daies continuallie, that the flesh boiled may run into oile, so as the bare bones may be seene: beate the haire into powder, and mingle the same with the oile; and annoint the heads of the standers by, and they shall seeme to have horses or asses heads."—Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584, p. 315.

** *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2.

†† Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584.—Epistle to the Readers, in which he afterwards speaks of "the want of Robin Goodfellowe and the fairies, which were woont to mainteine chat, and the common peoples talke in this behalfe."

‡‡ "Ob. Here comes my messenger."—*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, act iii. sc. 2.

§§ "Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so."—Act ii. sc. 3.

*** "Ob. My gentle Puck, come hither."—Act ii. sc. 3.

††† "Ob. Welcome, good Robin."—Act iv. sc. 1.

and again, on receiving commission from the same quarter:—

“*Obe.* About the wood go swifter than the wind :

Puck. I go, I go; look, how I go;

Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.”

Act iii. sc. 2.

Upon the whole we may be allowed, from the preceding dissertation, to consider the following series of circumstances as entitled to the appellation of facts: namely, that the *patria* of our popular system of fairy mythology, was the Scandinavian Peninsula; that, on its admission into this country, it gradually underwent various modifications through the influence of Christianity, the introduction of classical associations, and the prevalence of feudal manners; but that ultimately two systems became established; one in Scotland, founded on the wild and more terrific parts of the Gothic mythology, and the other in England, built, indeed, on the same system, but from a selection of its milder features, and converted by the genius of Shakspeare into one of the most lovely creations of a sportive imagination. Such, in fact, has been the success of our bard in expanding and colouring the germs of Gothic fairyism; in assigning to its tiny agents new attributes and powers; and in clothing their ministration with the most light and exquisite imagery, that his portraits, in all their essential parts, have descended to us as indissolubly connected with, and indeed nearly, if not altogether, forming our ideas of the fairy tribe.

The canvas, it is true, which he stretched, has been since expanded, and new groups have been introduced; but the outline and the mode of colouring which he employed, have been invariably followed. It is, in short, to his picture of the fairy world, that we are indebted for the “*Nymphidia*” of Drayton;* the “*Robin Goodfellow*” of Jonson;† the miniatures of Fletcher and Browne;‡ the full-length portraits of Herrick;§ the sly allusions of Corbet,** and the spirited and picturesque sketches of Milton.††

To Shakspeare, therefore, as the remodeller, and almost the inventor of our fairy system, may, with the utmost propriety, be addressed the elegant compliment which Browne has paid to Occleve, certainly inappropriate as applied to that rugged imitator of Chaucer, but admirably adapted to the peculiar powers of our bard, and delightfully expressive of what we may conceive would be the gratitude, were such testimony possible, of these children of his playful fancy:—

“ Many times he hath been seene
With the faeries on the greene,
And to them his pipe did sound
As they danced in a round;
Mickle solace would they make him,
And at midnight often wake him;
And convey him from his roome
To a fiede of yellow broome,
Or into the meadowes where

Mints perfume the gentle aire,
And where Flora spreads her treasure,
There they would beginn their measure.
If it chanc'd night's sable shrowds
Muffled Cynthia up in clouds,
Safely home they then would see him,
And from breakes and quagmires free him.
There are few such swaines as he
Now a days for harmonie.”‡‡

* This beautiful and highly fanciful poem could not certainly have been written before 1605; for the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes, which was first published in Spain during the above year, is expressly mentioned in one of the stanzas; and Mr. Malone thinks that the earliest edition of the *Nymphidia* was printed in 1619.

† Peck attributes this song to Ben Jonson; and Percy observes, that it seems to have been originally intended for some masque.—*Reliques*, vol. iii. p. 203. ed. 1594.

‡ See Fletcher's *Faithfull Shepherdess*, and Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*.

§ Herrick, as I have observed in a former work, seems more particularly to have delighted in drawing the manners and costume of the fairy world.—He has devoted several of his most elaborate poems to these sportive creations of fancy. Under the titles of *The Fairy Temple*, *Oberon's Palace*, *The Fairy Queen*, and *Oberon's Feast*, a variety of curious and minute imagery is appositely introduced.—*Literary Hours*, 3d edit. vol. iii. p. 85. To these may be added another elegantly descriptive piece, entitled, *King Oberon's Apparel*, written by Sir John Mennis, and published in *The Musarum Deliciæ*, or *The Muses Recreation*, 1656.

** In his political ballad entitled *The Fairies Farewell*.

†† Vide *L'Allegro*, and the occasional sketches in *Paradise Lost* and *Comus*.

‡‡ See *Shepherd's Pipe*, *Eglogue 1.* Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. vi. p. 315. col. 2.

CHAPTER X.

Observations on *Romeo and Juliet*; on the *Taming of the Shrew*; on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; on *King Richard the Third*; on *King Richard the Second*; on *King Henry the Fourth, Parts First and Second*; on *The Merchant of Venice*; and on *Hamlet*—Dissertation on the *Agency of Spirits and Apparitions*, and on the *Ghost in Hamlet*.

IN endeavouring to ascertain the chronological series of our author's plays, we must ever hold in mind, that, in general, nothing more than a choice of probabilities is before us, and that, whilst weighing their preponderancy, the slightest additional circumstance, so equally are they sometimes balanced, may turn the scale. It appears to us, that an occurrence of this kind will be found to point out, more accurately than hitherto, the precise period to which the first sketch of the following tragedy may be ascribed.

7. **ROMEO AND JULIET: 1593.** The passage in this play on which the commentators have chiefly relied for the establishment of their respective dates, runs thus:—

“ Nurse. Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas-eve at night, shall she (Juliet) be *fourteen*.
That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
’Tis since *the earthquake* now *eleven years*;
And she was *wean’d*,—I never shall forget it,—
For then she could *stand alone*; nay, by the rood,
She could have *run and waddled* all about.” Act i. sc. 3.

Building on Shakspeare's usual custom of alluding to the events of his own time, and transferring them to the scene and period of the piece on which he happened to be engaged, Mr. Tyrwhitt with much probability conjectured, that the poet, in these lines, had in view the earthquake which, according to Stowe,* and Gabriel Harvey, took place in England on the 6th of April, 1580; but then, relying, unfortunately too much, on the computation of the good nurse, he hastily concludes, that *Romeo and Juliet*, or a part of it at least, was written in 1591.

Mr. Malone, after admitting the inference of Mr. Tyrwhitt, adds another conjecture, that the foundation of this play might be laid in 1591, and finished at a subsequent period, which period he has assigned in his chronology to the year 1595.

Lastly, Mr. Chalmers, principally because Shakspeare appears to have borrowed some imagery in the fifth act, from Daniel's “*Complaint of Rosamond*,” which was entered at Stationers' Hall on the 4th of February, 1592, has ascribed the first sketch of *Romeo and Juliet* to the spring-time of the same year.

Now, adopting the opinion of Mr. Tyrwhitt as to Shakspeare's reference to the earthquake of 1580, a little attention to the lines which the poet has put into the mouth of his garrulous nurse, will convince us that these gentlemen are alike mistaken in their chronological calculations.

The nurse in the first place tells us, that Juliet was within little more than a fortnight of being fourteen years old, an assertion in which she could not be incorrect, as it is corroborated by Lady Capulet, who thinks her daughter, in consequence of this age, fit for marriage. In the next place she informs us that Juliet was weaned on the day of the earthquake, and as she could then stand and run alone, we must conceive her to have been at this period at least a twelvemonth

* See Stowe's Chronicle, and Gabriel Harvey's Letter in the Preface to Spenser's Works, edit. 1679.

old; and thirdly, and immediately afterwards we are told, with a contradiction which assigns to Juliet but the age of twelve, —

“ ’Tis since the earthquake now eleven years.”

There can be no doubt, therefore, that this miscalculation of eleven for thirteen years, was intended as a characteristic feature of the superannuated nurse, and that, assuming the era of 1580 as the epoch meant to be conveyed in the allusion to the earthquake at Verona, the composition of *Romeo and Juliet* must be allotted, not to the years 1591, 1592, or 1595, but to the year 1593.

It appears somewhat singular, indeed, that Mr. Malone, contrary to his usual custom, should have given a place in his *Chronology* not to the first sketch of this play, but to a supposed completion of it in 1595; more especially when we find, from his own words, that this, like several other dramas of our bard, was gradually and successively improved, and that, though first printed in 1597, it was not filled up and completed as we now have it, until 1599, when a second edition was published.

Some surprise also must be excited by the reasons which induced Mr. Chalmers to date the first sketch of this tragedy in the spring of 1592. Of these the first, he remarks, “ is plainly an allusion to the *Faerie Queene*, the three first books of which were published in 1590; and which was continually present in our poet’s mind; *Mercutio*, in his airy and satiric speech, cries out, —

“ O, then, I see *Queen Mab* hath been with you.
She is the fairies midwife; and she comes,
In shape no bigger than agate stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman :”

forgetting, that between the popular fairies, the tiny elves, of Shakspeare, and the allegorical fairies of Spenser, there is not the smallest similarity, not even a point in contact. The second, drawn from the imitation of *Daniel*, has been noticed above, and might with as much, if not more, probability be assigned for its date in 1593 as in the year preceding.

There is much reason to suppose, from a late communication by Mr. Haslewood, that this play was not altogether founded on Arthur Broke’s “ *Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*,” but partly on a theatrical exhibition of the same story which had taken place anterior to 1562; for in a copy of Broke’s poem of this date in the Collection of the Rev. H. White, of the Close, Lichfield, occurs an address “ *To the Reader*,” not found in Mr. Capell’s impression of 1562, and omitted in the edition of 1577, which closes with the following curious piece of information: — “ *Though I saw*,” observes Broke, speaking in reference to his story, “ the same argument lately set forth on the stage with more commendation, then I can looke for (being there much better set for then I have or can doe), yet the same matter penned as it is, may serve to lyke good effect, if the readers do brynge with them lyke good myndes, to consider it, which hath the more encouraged me to publishe it, suche as it is.” *

Here we find three important circumstances announced: that a play on this subject had, previous to 1562, been set forth with no little preparation; that it contained the same argument and matter with the *Tragical History*, and that it had been well received and productive of a good effect! Thirty years, consequently, before Shakspeare’s tragedy appeared, had the stage been familiar with this pathetic tale. †

* *British Bibliographer*, vol. ii. p. 115.—The title, which is wanting in Mr. Capell’s copy of 1562, is thus given by Mr. Haslewood:—

“ *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, written first in Italian by Bandell, and nowe in English by Ar. Br. In ædibus Richardi Tottelli. Cum Privilegio. (Col.) Imprinted at London in Flete strete within Temble barre, at the signe of the hand and starre, by Richard Tottill the xix day of November. An. do. 1562.”

† “ *Steevens*,” remarks Mr. Haslewood, “ in a note prefixed to the play, rather prophetically observes, ‘ we are not yet at the end of our discoveries relative to the originals of our author’s dramatic pieces:’ ”

The play therefore, as well as the metrical history of Broke, must have departed, in its catastrophe, from the story of Luigi da Porta, in which Juliet awakens from her trance before the death of Romeo. It is probable also that the play misled the English translator, and both Shakspeare; for it is remarkable that Broke, who pretends to translate from Bandello, has deserted his supposed original, which, with regard to the denouement, as in every thing else, precisely copies Da Porta, who, it would seem, had the honour of improving on a preceding writer by the introduction of this novel and affecting incident.

“The origin of Shakspeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” observes Mr. Dunlop, “has generally been referred to the *Giuletta* of Luigi da Porta. Of this tale Mr. Douce has attempted to trace the origin as far back as the Greek romance by Xenophon Ephesius; but when it is considered that this work was not published in the lifetime of Luigi da Porta, I do not think the resemblance so strong as to induce us to believe that it was seen by that novelist. His *Giuletta* is evidently borrowed from the thirty-second novel of Massucio, which must unquestionably be regarded as the ultimate origin of the celebrated drama of Shakspeare, though it has escaped, as far as I know, the notice of his numerous commentators. In the story of Massucio, a young gentleman, who resided in Sienna, is privately married by a friar to a lady of the same place, of whom he was deeply enamoured. Mariotto, the husband, is forced to fly from his country, on account of having killed one of his fellow-citizens in a squabble in the streets. An interview takes place between him and his wife before the separation. After the departure of Mariotto, Gianozza, the bride, is pressed by her friends to marry: she discloses her perplexing situation to the friar, by whom the nuptial ceremony had been performed. He gives her a soporific powder, which she drinks dissolved in water; and the effect of this narcotic is so strong that she is believed to be dead by her friends, and interred according to custom. The accounts of her death reach her husband in Alexandria, whither he had fled before the arrival of a special messenger, who had been dispatched by the friar to acquaint him with the real posture of affairs. Mariotto forthwith returns in despair to his own country, and proceeds to lament over the tomb of his bride. Before this time she had recovered from her lethargy, and had set out for Alexandria in quest of her husband, who meanwhile is apprehended and executed for the murder he had formerly committed. Giannozza, finding he was not in Egypt, returns to Sienna, and, learning his unhappy fate, retires to a convent, where she soon after dies. The catastrophe here is different from the novel of Luigi da Porta and the drama of Shakspeare, but there is a perfect correspondence in the preliminary incidents. The tale of Massucio was written about 1470, which was long prior to the age of Luigi da Porta, who died in 1531, or of Cardinal Bembo, to whom some have attributed the greater part of the composition.” *

With the exception of the incident which distinguishes the close of the story as related by Luigi da Porta, Shakspeare has worked up the materials which preceded his drama with the most astonishing effect; and by the beauty of his sentiments, the justness of his delineation, and the felicity of his language, he has

true: a play founded on the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, appearing on the stage ‘with commendation,’ anterior to the time of Shakspeare, is a new discovery for the commentators.”

To the notices afforded us by the Commentators on Shakspeare, of the popularity of the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, may be added the following, collected by the industry of Mr. Haslewood. The first is from “*The Pleasant fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*, by T. Peend, Gent. With a morall in English Verse. Anno Domini 1565, Mense Decembris. (Col.) Imprinted at London in Flete streat beneath the Conduyt, at the sygne of S. John Euangeliste, by Thomas Colwell. Oct. 24 leaves.”

“And Juliet, Romeus yonge,
for bewty did embrace,
Yet dyd hys manhode well agree,
unto hys worthy grace:”

On which lines occurs the following note, at the end of the poem:—“*Juliet*. A noble maiden of the cytye Verona in Italye, whyche loued Romeus, eldest sonne of the Lorde Montesche, and beinge pryuely maryed together: he at last poysoned hymselfe for loue of her. She for sorowe of his deathe, slewe her selfe in the same tombe, with hys dagger.”—*Brit. Bibliographer*, vol. ii. p. 344, 347, 349.

The second instance is from a work entitled “*Philotimus*. The Warre betwixt Nature and Fortune. Compiled by Brian Melbancke Student in Graies Inne. Palladi virtutis famula. Imprinted at London by Roger Warde, dwelling neere unto Holborne Conduit at the signe of the Talbot, 1583.” 4to. p. 226.

“Nowe Priams sone give place, thy Helen’s hew is staine. O Troylus, weepe no more, faire Cressed thyne is lothlye fowle. Nor Hercules thou haste cause to vaunt for thy swete Omphale: *nor Romeo thou hast cause to weepe for Juliets losse*,” &c.—*Brit. Bibliographer*, vol. ii. p. 438, 444.

* *The History of Fiction*, vol. ii. p. 329–341. 1st edit.

drawn the most glowing, pathetic, and interesting picture of disastrous love which the world has yet contemplated.

We perceive the highest tone of enthusiasm, combined with the utmost purity, fidelity, and tenderness, pervading every stage of the intercourse between Romeo and Juliet: and, elevated as they are, to an almost perfect ideal representation of the influence of love, so much of actual nature is interwoven with every expression of their feelings, that our sympathy irresistibly augments with the progress of the fable, and becomes at length almost overwhelming. Indeed, such is the force of the appeal which the poet makes to the heart in this bewitching drama, that, were it not relieved by the occasional intervention of lighter emotions, the effect would be truly painful; but, with his wonted fertility of resource, our author has effected this purpose in a manner, which, while it heightens by the power of contrast, at the same time diversifies the picture, and exhilarates the mind. Every hue of many-coloured life, the effervescence of hope, and the hushed repose of disappointment, the bloom of youth, and the withered aspect of age, the intoxication of rapture, and the bitterness of grief, the scintillations of wit, and the speechless agonies of despair, tears and smiles, groans and laughter, are so blended in the texture of this piece, as to produce the necessary relief, without disturbing the union and harmony of the whole, or impairing, in the smallest degree, the gradually augmenting interest which accompanies the hapless lovers to their tomb.

What, for instance, can be more opposed to each other, and to the youthful victims of the drama, than the characters of Mercutio, Friar Lawrence, and the Nurse; yet the brilliancy and gaiety of the first, the philosophic dignity of the second, and the humorous garrulity of the third, while they afford a welcome repose to our feelings, are essential to the development of the plot, and to the full display of those scenes of terror and distress which alternately freeze and melt the heart, to the last syllable of this sweet and mournful tale.

Numerous as have been its relators, who has told it like our matchless bard?

"It was reserved for Shakspeare," remarks Schlegel, in a tone of the finest enthusiasm, "to unite purity of heart and the glow of imagination, sweetness and dignity of manners and passionate violence, in one ideal picture. By the manner in which he has handled it, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul, and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses themselves into soul, and at the same time is a melancholy elegy on its frailty, from its own nature, and external circumstances; at once the deification and the burial of love. It appears here like a heavenly spark that, descending to the earth, is converted into a flash of lightning, by which mortal creatures are almost in the same moment set on fire and consumed. Whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, is breathed into this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, it hurries on from the first timidly-bold declaration of love and modest return, to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; then, amidst alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the death of the two lovers, who still appear enviable as their love survives them, and as by their death they have obtained a triumph over every separating power. The sweetest and the bitterest, love and hatred, festivity and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchres, the fulness of life and self-annihilation, are all here brought close to each other; and all these contrasts are so blended in the harmonious and wonderful work, into a unity of impressions, that the echo which the whole leaves behind in the mind, resembles a single but endless sigh." *

8. THE TAMING OF THE SHREW: 1594. Nothing appearing to invalidate the conclusion of Mr. Malone, that this was one of our author's earliest plays, we have adhered to his chronology; for the lines quoted by Mr. Chalmers, in order to establish a posterior date,

" 'Tis death for any one in Mantua
To come to Padua," &c.

* A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature. By Augustus William Schlegel. Translated from the original German, by John Black. 8vo. 2 vols. 1815. vol. i. p. 187, 188.

would, if there be any weight in this instance, procure a similar assignment, as to time, for the Comedy of Errors, where we find a like prohibition of intercourse:—

——— “If any Syracusan born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies ;” Act i. sc. 1.

yet no one, in consequence of such a passage, has entertained an idea of ascribing this comedy to the year 1598.

The outline of the induction to this drama may be traced, as Mr. Douce observes, through many intermediate copies, to the “*Sleeper Awakened*” of the Arabian Nights; but it is most probable, that the immediate source of this prelude, both to the anonymous author of the old *Taming of a Shrew*, and to Shakspeare himself, was the story-book said by Warton to have been once in the possession of Collins the poet, a collection of short comic tales, “set forth by mayster Richard Edwards, mayster of her Majesties revels,” in the year 1570.

From whatever source, however, this apologue may have been directly taken, we cannot but feel highly indebted to Shakspeare for its conversion into a lesson of exquisite moral irony, while, at the same time, it unfolds his wonted richness of humor, and minute delineation of character. The whole, indeed, is conducted with such lightness and frolic spirit, with so many happy touches of risible simplicity, yet chastised by so constant an adherence to nature and verisimilitude, as to form one of the most delightful and instructive sketches.

So admirably drawn is the character of Sly, that we regret to find the interlocation of the group before whom the piece is supposed to be performed, has been dropped by our author after the close of the first scene of the play. Here we behold the jolly tinker nodding, and, at length, honestly exclaiming, “*Would’t were done!*” and, though the integrity of the representation require that he should finally return to his former state, the transformation, as before, being effected during his sleep, yet we hear no more of this truly comic personage; whereas in the spurious play, he is frequently introduced commenting on the scene, is carried off the stage fast asleep, and, on the termination of the drama, undergoes the necessary metamorphosis.

It would appear, therefore, either that our bard’s continuation of the induction has been unaccountably lost, or that he trusted the remainder of Sly’s part to the improvisatory ingenuity of the performers; or, what is more likely, that they were instructed to copy a certain portion of what had been written, for this subordinate division of the tinker’s character, by the author of the elder play. Some of the observations, indeed, of Sly, as given by the writer of this previous comedy, are incompatible with the fable and dramatis personæ of Shakspeare’s production; and have, consequently, been very injudiciously introduced by Mr. Pope; but there are two passages which, with the exception of but two names, are not only accordant with our poet’s prelude, but absolutely necessary to its completion. Shakspeare, as we have seen, represents Sly as nodding at the end of the first scene; and the parts of the anonymous play to which we allude, are those where the nobleman orders the sleeping tinker to be put into his own apparel again, and where he awakens in this garb, and believes the whole to have been a dream; the only alterations required in this finale, being the omission of the Christian appellative Sim, and the conversion of Tapster into Hostess. These few lines were, most probably, those which Shakspeare selected as a necessary accompaniment to his piece, from the old drama supposed to have been written in 1590;* and these lines should be withdrawn from the notes in all the modern editions, and, though distinguished as borrowed property, should be immediately connected with the text. †

* “I suspect,” says Mr. Malone, “that the anonymous *Taming of a Shrew* was written about the year 1590, either by George Peele or Robert Greene.”

† “A very droll print of village society,” observes Mr. Felton, “might be taken” from this interlude. “It might represent this worthy tinker, at *Marian Hacket’s* of Wincot, with *Stephen Sly*, *Old John Naps o’ th’ Green*, *Peter Turf*, and *Henry Pimpernell*, not as smoking their pipes, (as scarce at that day in-

As to the play itself, the rapidity and variety of its action, the skilful connection of its double plot, and the strength and vivacity of its principal characters, must for ever ensure its popularity. There is, indeed, a depth and breadth of colouring in its execution, a boldness and prominence of relief, which may be thought to border upon coarseness; but the result has been an effect equally powerful and interesting, though occasionally, as the subject demanded, somewhat glaring and grotesque.

Petruchio, Katharina, and Grumio, the most important personages of the play, are consistently supported throughout, and their peculiar features touched and brought forward with singular sharpness and spirit; the wild, fantastic humour of the first, the wayward and insolent demeanour of the second, contrasted with the meek, modest, and retired disposition of her sister, together with the inextinguishable wit and drollery of the third, form a picture, at once rich, varied, and pre-eminently diverting.

9. **THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA: 1595.** There can be little doubt that the episode of Felismena, in the "Diana of George of Montemayor," was the source whence the principal part of the plot of this play has been taken; for, though the Translation of Bartholomew Yong was not published until 1598, it appears from the translator's "Preface to divers learned Gentlemen," that it had been completed in the year 1582; "it hath lyen by me finished," he says, "Horace's ten and six yeeres more," a declaration which renders it very probable, that the manuscript may have been circulated among his friends, and the more striking parts impressed upon their memory. But we are further informed, in this very preface, that a partial but excellent version of the Diana had preceded his labours:—

"Well might I," says Yong, "have excused these paines, if onely Edward Paston, Esquier, who heere and there for his own pleasure, as I understand, hath aptly turned out of Spanish into English some leaves that liked him best, had also made an absolute and complete Translation of all the Parts of Diana: the which, for his travell in that countrey, and great knowledge in that language, accompanied with other learned and good parts in him, had of all others, that ever I heard translate these Bookes, prooved the rarest and worthiest to be embraced." We also learn from Dr. Farmer, that the Diana was translated two or three years before 1598, by one Thomas Wilson; but, he adds, "this work, I am persuaded, was never published entirely; perhaps some parts of it were, or the tale might have been translated by others."

These intimations sufficiently warrant the conclusion, that Shakspeare may have become familiar with this portion of the Spanish romance, anterior to the publication of Yong's version in 1598; indeed so closely does the story of Proteus and Julia correspond with the episode of Montemayor, that Shakspeare's obligations cannot be mistaken.

"He has copied the original," as Mr. Dunlop observes, "in some minute particulars, which clearly evince the source from which the drama has been derived. As for example, in the letter which Proteus addresses to Julia, her rejection of it when offered by her waiting-maid, and the device by which she afterwards attempts to procure a persual. (Act. i. sc. 2.) In several passages, indeed, the dramatist has copied the language of the pastoral." *

This play, though betraying marks of negligence and haste, especially towards its termination, is yet a most pleasing and instructive composition. There is scarcely a page of it, indeed, that is not pregnant with some just and useful maxim, and we stand amazed at the blind and tasteless decisions of Hanmer, Theobald, and Upton, who not only disputed the authenticity of this drama, but condemned it as a very inferior production.

So far are these opinions, however, from having any just foundation, that we may safely assert the peculiar style of Shakspeare to be vividly impressed on all

roduced), but drinking their ale in *stone-jugs*."—Imperfect Hints towards a New Edition of Shakspeare, part i. p. 21.

* History of Fiction, 1st. edit. vol. iii. p. 131.

the parts of this drama, whether serious or comic; and as to its aphoristic wealth, it may be truly said, with Dr. Johnson, that "it abounds with *γνῶμας* beyond most of his plays, and few have more lines or passages, which, singly considered, are eminently beautiful."

But besides this, justice requires of us to remark, that there is a romantic and pathetic cast, both of sentiment and character, throughout the more elevated parts of this production, which has given to them a peculiar charm. The delineation of Julia in particular, from the gentleness and modesty of her disposition, the ill requital of her attachment, and the hazardous disguise which she assumes, must be confessed to excite the tenderest emotions of sympathy. This is a character, indeed, which Shakspeare has delighted to embody, and which he has further developed in the lovely and fascinating portraits of Viola and Imogen, who, like Julia, forsaken or despised, are driven to the same expedients, and, deserting their native roof, perform their adventurous pilgrimages under similar modes of concealment.*

A portion also of this romantic enthusiasm has thrown an interest over the characters of Sir Eglamour and Silvia, and evanescent as the part of the former is, we see enough of him to regret that he has not been brought more forward on the canvas. He is represented as a gentleman

"Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplished,"

and when Silvia, on the eve of her elopement, solicits his assistance, she thus addresses him:

"Thyself hast loved; and I have heard thee say,
No grief did ever come so near thy heart,
As when thy lady and thy true love died,
Upon whose grave thou vow'dst pure chastity." Act iv. sc. 3.

Nor are the ludicrous scenes less indicative of the hand of Shakspeare, the part of Launce, which forms the chief source of mirth in this play, being supported throughout with undeviating wit and humour, and with an effect greatly superior to that of the comic dialogue of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

Nor must we forget to remark, that the versification of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is peculiarly sweet and harmonious, and very happily corresponds with the delicacy, simplicity, and tenderness of feeling which have so powerfully shed their never-failing fascination over many of its serious scenes. How exquisitely, for instance, does the rhythm of the following lines coalesce with and expand their sentiment and imagery:—

"*Julia.* Counsel, Lucetta; gentle girl, assist me!
— Tell me some good mean,
How, with my honour, I may undertake
A journey to my loving Proteus," &c. Act ii. sc. 7.

10. KING RICHARD THE THIRD: 1595. It is the conjecture of Mr. Malone, and by which he has been guided in his chronological arrangement, that this play, and *King Richard the Second*, were written, acted, registered and printed in the year 1597. That they were registered and published during this year, we have indisputable authority;† but that they were written and acted within the same period, is a supposition without any proof, and, to say the least of it, highly improbable.

Mr. Chalmers, struck by this incautious assertion, of two such plays being

* It is remarkable, that a great poet of the present day has exhibited, in his poetical romances, an equal attachment to this mode of disguise. I will here also add, that the compass of English poetry does not, in point of interest, afford any thing more stimulating and attractive than the Dramas of Shakspeare, the Romances of Scott, and the *Tales of Byron*.

† *Richard the Second* was entered on the Stationers' books, on August 29, 1597; and *Richard the Third* on October 20, 1597; and both printed the same year.

written, acted, and published in a few months; * reflecting that Shakspeare, impressed by the character of Gloucester, in his play of Henry the Sixth, might be induced to resume his national dramas by continuing the "Historie" of Richard, to which he might be more immediately stimulated by his knowledge that an enterlude, entitled the "Tragedie of Richard the Third," had been exhibited in 1593, or 1594; and ingeniously surmising that Richard the Second was a subsequent production, because it ushered in a distinct and concatenated series of history, has, under this view of the subject, given precedence to Richard the Third in the order of composition, and assigned its origin to the year 1595.

The description of a small volume of Epigrams by John Weever, in Mr. Beloe's Anecdotes of Literature, has since confirmed the chronology of Mr. Chalmers, so far as it proves that one of Shakspeare's Richards had certainly been acted in 1595.

The book in question, in the collection of Mr. Comb, of Henley, and supposed to be a unique, was published in 1599, at which period, according to the date of the print of him prefixed by Cecill, the author was twenty-three years old, but Weever tells us, in some introductory stanzas, that when he wrote the poems which compose this volume, he was not twenty years old; that he was one

"That twenty twelve months yet did *never know*,"

consequently, these Epigrams must have been written in 1595, though not printed before 1599. They exhibit the following title: "Epigrammes in the oldest Cut and newest Fashion. A twise seven Houres (in so many Weekes) Studie. No longer (like the Fashion) not unlike to continue. The first seven, John Weever. At London: printed by V. S. for Thomas Bushell, and are to be sold at his shop, at the great North doore of Paules. 1599. 12mo."

Of this collection the twenty-second Epigram of the fourth Weeke, which we have formerly had occasion to notice, and which we shall now give at length, is addressed

"AD GULIELMUM SHAKSPEARE.

"Honie-Tongd Shakspeare, when I saw thine issue,
I swore Apollo got them, and none other,
Their rosie-tainted features clothed in tissue,
Some heaven-born goddesse said to be their mother.
Rose cheeckt Adonis with his amber tresses,
Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
Chaste Lucretia, virgine-like her dresses,
Proud lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her,
Romeo, RICHARD, more whose names I know not,
Their sugred tongues and power attractive beauty,
Say they are saints, although that Sts they shew not,
For thousand vowes to them subjective dutie,
They burn in love thy children Shakspeare let them
Go wo thy muse more nymphish brood beget them." †

We have no doubt that by the "Richard" of this epigram the author meant to imply the play of Richard the Third, which, according to our arrangement, was the immediately succeeding tragedy to Romeo, and may be said to have been almost promised by the poet in the two concluding scenes of the Last Part of King Henry the Sixth, a promise which, as we believe, was carried into execution after an interval of three years. ‡

* It must be recollected that Mr. Malone's "Chronological Order of Shakspeare's Plays," is founded, not on the period of their publication, but on that of their composition; it is "an attempt to ascertain the order in which the Plays of Shakspeare were *written*,"

† Anecdotes of Literature and Scarce books, vol. vi. p. 156, 158, 159.

‡ The lines which seem to imply the future intentions of the poet, are these:—

"Glo. Clarence, beware: thou keep'st me from the light;
But I will sort a pitchy day for thee:
For I will buz abroad such prophecies,
That Edward shall be fearful of his life;

The character of Richard the Third, which had been opened in so masterly a manner in the Concluding Part of Henry the Sixth, is, in this play, developed in all its horrible grandeur.

It is, in fact, the picture of a demoniacal incarnation, moulding the passions and foibles of mankind, with super-human precision, to its own iniquitous purposes. Of this isolated and peculiar state of being Richard himself seems sensible, when he declares—

“ I have no brother, I am like no brother:
And this word love, which grey-beards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me : I am myself alone.” Act v. sc. 6.

From a delineation like this Milton must have caught many of the most striking features of his Satanic portrait. The same union of unmitigated depravity, and consummate intellectual energy, characterises both, and renders what would otherwise be loathsome and disgusting, an object of sublimity and shuddering admiration.

Richard, stript as he is of all the softer feelings, and all the common charities, of humanity, possessed of “neither pity, love, nor fear,” and loaded with every dangerous and dreadful vice, would, were it not for his unconquerable powers of mind, be insufferably revolting. But, though insatiate in his ambition, envious, and hypocritical in his disposition, cruel, bloody, and remorseless in all his deeds, he displays such an extraordinary share of cool and determined courage, such alacrity and buoyancy of spirit, such constant self-possession, such an intuitive intimacy with the workings of the human heart, and such matchless skill in rendering them subservient to his views, as so far to subdue our detestation and abhorrence of his villany, that we, at length, contemplate this fiend in human shape with a mingled sensation of intense curiosity and grateful terror.

The task, however, which Shakspeare undertook was, in one instance, more arduous than that which Milton subsequently attempted; for, in addition to the hateful constitution of Richard's moral character, he had to contend also against the prejudices arising from personal deformity, from a figure

“ curtail'd of it's fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before it's time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up;” Act i. sc. 1.

and yet, in spite of these striking personal defects, which were considered, also, as indicative of the depravity and wickedness of his nature, the poet has contrived, through the medium of the high mental endowments just enumerated, not only to obviate disgust, but to excite extraordinary admiration.

One of the most prominent and detestable vices indeed, in Richard's character, his hypocrisy, connected, as it always is, in his person, with the most profound skill and dissimulation, has, owing to the various parts which it induces him to assume, most materially contributed to the popularity of this play, both on the stage and in the closet. He is one who can “frame his face to all occasions,” and accordingly appears, during the course of his career, under the contrasted forms of a subject and a monarch, a politician and a wit, a soldier and a suitor, a sinner and a saint; and in all with such apparent ease and fidelity to nature, that

And then to purge his fear, I'll be thy death.
King Henry, and the prince his son, are gone :
Clarence, thy turn is next, and then the rest.”—*Henry VI. Part III.* act v. sc. 6.

Glo. I'll blast his harvest, if your head were laid;
For yet I am not look'd on in the world.
This shoulder was ordain'd so thick, to heave;
And heave it shall some weight, or break my back :—
Work thou the way,—and thou shalt execute.”—*Ibid.* act v. sc. 7.

while to the explorer of the human mind he affords, by his penetration and address, a subject of peculiar interest and delight, he offers to the practised performer a study well calculated to call forth his fullest and finest exertions. He, therefore, whose histrionic powers are adequate to the just exhibition of this character, may be said to have attained the highest honours of his profession; and, consequently, the popularity of Richard the Third, notwithstanding the moral enormity of its hero, may be readily accounted for, when we recollect, that the versatile and consummate hypocrisy of the tyrant has been embodied by the talents of such masterly performers as Garrick, Kemble, Cook, and Kean.

So overwhelming and exclusive is the character of Richard, that the comparative insignificance of all the other persons of the drama may be necessarily inferred; they are reflected to us, as it were, from his mirror, and become more or less important, and more or less developed, as he finds it necessary to act upon them; so that our estimate of their character is entirely founded on his relative conduct, through which we may very correctly appreciate their strength or weakness.

The only exception to this remark is in the person of Queen Margaret, who, apart from the agency of Richard, and dimly seen in the darkest recesses of the picture, pours forth, in union with the deep tone of this tragedy, the most dreadful curses and imprecations; with such a wild and prophetic fury, indeed, as to involve the whole scene in tenfold gloom and horror.

We have to add that the moral of this play is great and impressive. Richard, having excited a general sense of indignation, and a general desire of revenge, and, unaware of his danger from having lost, through familiarity with guilt, all idea of moral obligation, becomes at length the victim of his own enormous crimes; he falls not unvisited by the terrors of conscience, for, on the eve of danger and of death, the retribution of another world is placed before him; the spirits of those whom he had murdered reveal the awful sentence of his fate, and his bosom heaves with the infliction of eternal torture.

11. **KING RICHARD THE SECOND: 1596.** Our great poet having been induced to improve and re-compose the Dramatic History of Henry the Sixth, and to continue the character of Gloucester to the close of his usurpation, in the drama of Richard the Third, very naturally, from the success which had crowned these efforts, reverted to the prior part of our national story for fresh subjects, and, led by a common principle of association, selected for the commencement of a new series of historical plays, which should form an unbroken chain with those that he had previously written, the reign of Richard the Second. On this account, therefore, and from the intimation of time, noticed by Mr. Chalmers, towards the conclusion of the first act, we are led to coincide with this gentleman in assigning the composition of Richard the Second to the year 1596.

Of the character of this unfortunate young prince, Shakspeare has given us a delineation in conformity with the general tone of history, but heightened by many exquisite and pathetic touches. Richard was beautiful in his person, and elegant in his manners; * affectionate, generous, and faithful in his attachments, and though intentionally neglected in his education, not defective in his understanding. Accustomed, by his designing uncles, to the company of the idle and the dissipated, and to the unrestrained indulgence of his passions, we need not wonder that levity, ostentation, and prodigality should mark his subsequent career, and should ultimately lead him to destruction.

Though the errors of his misguided youth are forcibly depicted in the drama, yet the poet has reserved his strength for the period of adversity. Richard, de-

* "This prince," observes Mr. Godwin, "is universally described to us as one of the most beautiful youths that was ever beheld; and from the portrait of him still existing in Westminster Abbey, however imperfect was the art of painting in that age, connoisseurs have inferred that his person was admirably formed, and his features cast in a mould of the most perfect symmetry. His appearance and manner were highly pleasing, and it was difficult for any one to approach him without being prepossessed in his favour." — *Life of Chaucer*, vol. iii. p. 170. 8vo edit.

scending from his throne, discovers the unexpected virtues of humility, fortitude, and resignation, and becomes not only an object of love and pity, but of admiration; and there is nothing in the whole compass of our author's plays better calculated to produce, with full effect, these mingled emotions of compassion and esteem, than the passages which paint the sentiments and deportment of the fallen monarch. Patience, submission, and misery were never more feelingly expressed than in the following lines :

" *K. Rich.* What must the king do now? Must he submit?
The king shall do it. Must he be depos'd?" &c. Act iii. sc. 3.

and with what an innate nobility of heart does he repress the homage of his attendants!

" Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while :
I live with bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
Need friends :—Subjected thus,
How can you say to me—I am a king?" Act iii. sc. 2.

Nor does his conduct, in the hour of suffering and extreme humiliation, derogate from the philosophy of his sentiments. In that admirable opening of the second scene of the fifth act, where the Duke of York relates to his Duchess the entrance of Bolingbroke and Richard into London, the demeanour of the latter is thus portrayed :—

————— " Men's eyes
Did scowl on Richard; no man cried, God save him;" &c. Act v. sc. 2.

In representing Richard as falling by the hand of Sir Piers of Exton, Shakspeare has followed the Chronicle of Holinshed; but there can be no doubt but this unhappy monarch either starved himself under the influence of despair, or was starved by the cruelty of his enemies. If in the account which Speed has given us of this tragedy, the most complete that we possess, the relation of Polydore Virgil be correct, nothing can be conceived more diabolical than the conduct of Henry and his agents. "His diet being served in," says that historian, "and set before him in the wonted princely manner, hee was not suffered either to taste, or touch thereof." "Surely," adds Speed, in a manner which reflects credit on his sensibility, "hee is not a man who at the report of so exquisite a barbarisme, as Richard's enfamishment, feelles not chilling horror and detestation; what if but for a justly condemned galley-slave so dying? but how for an anointed King whose character (like that of holy orders) is indeleble?" *

Of the secondary characters of this play, "Old John of Gaunt, time-honour'd Lancaster," and his son Henry Bolingbroke, are brought forward with strict attention to the evidence of history; the chivalric spirit and zealous integrity of the first, and the cold, artificial features of the second, being struck off with great sharpness of outline, and strength of discrimination.

12. HENRY THE FOURTH; PART THE FIRST : 1596 ;

13. HENRY THE FOURTH; PART THE SECOND : 1596.

That both these plays were written in the year 1596, will, we think, appear from consulting the arguments and quotations adduced by Mr. Malone to prove them the compositions of 1597 and 1598, and by Mr. Chalmers with the view of assigning them to the years 1596 and 1597; for while the latter gentleman has rendered it most probable, from the allusions which he has noticed in the play itself, that the First Part was written in 1596, the authorities and citations produced by the former, for the assignment of the Second Part to the year 1598, almost necessarily refer it, strange as it may appear, with only one exception,†

* Historie of Great Britaine, folio, p. 766, 777. 2d edit. 1623.

† The exception alluded to consists in a quotation from Jonson's Every Man out of his Humour, first

and that totally indecisive, to the very same year which witnessed the composition of its predecessor, namely 1596! Influenced by this result, and by the observation of Dr. Johnson, that these dramas appear "to be two, only because they are too long to be one," we have placed them under the same year, convinced, with Mr. Malone, that they could not be written before 1596; and induced, from the arguments to which he and his immediate successor in chronological research have advanced, though with a different object, to consider them as not written after that period. *

The inimitable genius of Shakspeare is no where more conspicuous than in the construction of these dramas, whether we consider the serious or the comic parts. In the former, which involve occurrences of the highest interest in a national point of view, the competition, and we may say, the contrast between Percy and the Prince of Wales, is supported with unrivalled talent and discrimination. Full of a fiery and uncontrollable courage, mingled with a portion of arrogance and spleen, generous, chivalric, and open, and breathing throughout a lofty and even sublime spirit, Hotspur appears before us a youthful model of enthusiastic and impetuous heroism.

Yet, noble and exciting as this character must be pronounced, notwithstanding the very obvious alloy of a vindictive and ungovernable temper, it is completely overshadowed by that which is attributed to the Prince of Wales; a result which may, with a perfect conviction of certainty, be ascribed to the combination of two very powerful causes,—to the rare union, in fact, of great and varied intellectual energy, with the utmost amiability of disposition. Percy has but the virtues and accomplishments of a military adventurer, for in society he is boisterous, self-willed, and unaccommodating; while Henry, to bravery equally gallant and undaunted, adds all the endearing arts of social intercourse. He is gay, witty, gentle, and good-tempered, with such a high relish for humour and frolic as to lead him, through an over-indulgence of this propensity, into numerous scenes of dissipation and idleness, and into a familiarity with persons admirably well calculated, it is true, for the gratification of the most fertile and comic imagination, but who, in every moral and useful light, are altogether worthless and degraded.

From the contaminating influence of such dangerous connections, he is rescued by the vigour of his mind, and the goodness of his heart; for, possessing a clear and unerring conception of the character of Falstaff and his associates, though he tolerate their intimacy from a reprehensible love of wit and humour, he beholds, with a consciousness of self-abasement, the depravity of their principles, and is guarded against any durable injury or impression from these dissolute companions of his sport.

The effect, however, of this temporary delusion is both in a moral and dramatic light singularly striking; contemned and humiliated in the eyes of those who surround him, little expectancy is entertained, not even by the King himself, of any permanently vigorous or dignified conduct in his son; for though he has, more than once, exhibited himself equal to the occasion, however great, which has called him forth, he has immediately relapsed into his former wild and eccentric habits. When, therefore, annihilating the gloom which has hitherto obscured

acted in 1599, as an authority for supposing the Second Part of King Henry IV. to have been written in 1598; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that both Mr. Malone and Mr. Chalmers have each committed an error in referring to this passage. It is in Act v. sc. 2, where Fastidius Brisk, in answer to Saviolina, says,—“No, lady, this is a kinsman to Justice Silence,” which Mr. Malone has converted into Justice Shallow; while Mr. Chalmers tells us, that “Ben Jonson, certainly, alluded to the Justice Silence of this play, in his *Every Man in his Humour*.”—Vide Chalmers’s Supplemental Apology, p. 331.

* I have not the smallest doubt but that Meres, in his List of our author’s Plays, published in September, 1598, meant to include both parts under his mention of Henry IV.; speaking of the poet’s excellence in both species of dramatic composition, he says, “for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, &c. &c.;—for tragedy, his *Richard II.* *Richard III.* *Henry IV.*; and had he recollected the Parts of Henry the Sixth, he would have included them, also, under the bare title of Henry VI.

his lustre, and shaking off his profligate companions like "dew-drops from the lion's mane," he comes forward, strong in moral resolution, dignified without effort, firm without ostentation, and consistent without a sense of sacrifice, a denouement is produced, at once great, satisfactory, and splendid.*

If the serious parts of these plays, however, be powerful and characteristic, the comic portion is still more entitled to our admiration, being rich, original, and varied, in a degree unparalleled by any other writer.

There never was a character drawn, perhaps, so complete and individualized as that of Falstaff, nor one in which so many contrasted qualities are rendered subservient to the production of the highest entertainment and delight. In the compound, however, is to be found neither atrocious vices, nor any decided moral virtues; it is merely a tissue, though woven with matchless skill, of the agreeable and the disagreeable, the former so preponderating as to stamp the result with the power of imparting pleasurable emotion.

Sensuality, under all its forms, is the vice of Falstaff; wit and gaiety are his virtues.

As to gratify his animal appetites, therefore, is the sole end and aim of his being, every faculty of his mind and body is directed exclusively to this purpose, and he is no further vicious, no further interesting and agreeable than may be necessary to the acquisition of his object. Had he succeeded but partially in the attainment of his views, and consequently by the means usually put in practice, he would have been contemptible, loathsome, and disgusting, but he has succeeded to an extent beyond all other men, and therefore by means of an extraordinary kind, and which have covered the fruition of his plans with an adventitious and even fascinating lustre.

The perfect Epicurism, in short, which he cultivates, requires for the obtention of its gratifications a multitude of brilliant and attractive qualifications; for, in order to run the full career of sensual enjoyment, associated as he was with a man of high rank, and considerable mental powers, it was necessary that he should render himself both highly acceptable and interesting, that he should assume the appearance or pretend to the possession of several virtues, and that he should be guilty of no very revolting or disgusting intemperance.

To perform this task, however, with unfailing effect, demanded, on the part of Falstaff, incessant intellectual vigour, and a perpetual command of temper, and these Shakspeare has bestowed upon him in their full plenitude. His wit is inexhaustible, his gaiety and good-humour undeviating, his address shrewd and discriminating, and, as the favourable opinion of his associates is, to a certain extent, essential to his enjoyments, he endeavours to impress the prince with confidence in his friendship and courage, his gratitude and fidelity, and to impose on his equals and inferiors a sense of his military and political importance. It is also requisite that, though an incorrigible lover of wine, of dainty fare, and of all libidinous delights, he should exhibit nothing either as the accompaniment or consequence of these pursuits, which should be beastly or loathsome; he is, therefore, never represented as in a state of intoxication, nor loaded with more infirmities than what corpulency produces; but is always himself, crafty, sprightly, selfish and intelligent, ever ready to invent and to enjoy the sport, the revel, and the jest.

Thus constituted, his social and intellectual qualities so blending with the dissolute propensities of his nature, that the epicure, and free-booter, the whore-monger and vain-glorious boaster, lose in the composition their native deformity, Falstaff becomes the most entertaining and seductive companion that the united

* An ingenious Essay has been lately published by Mr. Luders, in which an attempt is made, with some success, to prove, that the youthful dissipation ascribed to Henry, by the chroniclers, is without any adequate foundation. It is probable, however, that Shakspeare, had he been aware of this, would have preferred the popular statement, from its superior aptitude for dramatic effect.

powers of genius, levity, and laughter have ever, in the most felicitous hour of their mirth and fancy, created for the sons of men.

Yet, dangerous as such a delineation may appear, Shakspeare, with his usual attention to the best interests of mankind, has rendered it subservient to the most striking moral effects, both as these apply to the character of Falstaff himself, and to that of his temporary patron, the Prince of Wales; for while the virtue, energy, and good sense of the latter are placed in the most striking point of view by his firm dismissal of a most fascinating and too endeared voluptuary, the permanently degrading consequences of sensuality are exhibited in their full strength during the career, and in the fate, of the former.

It is very generally found that great and splendid vices are mingled with concomitant virtues, which often ultimately lead to self-accusation, and to the salutary agonies of remorse; but he who is deeply plunged in the grovelling pursuits of appetite is too frequently lost to all sense of shame, to all feeling of integrity or conscious worth. Polluted by the meanest depravities, not only religious principle ceases to affect the mind, but every thing which contributes to honour or to grandeur in the human character is gone for ever; a catastrophe to which wit and humour, by rendering the sensualist a more self-deluded and self-satisfied being, lend the most powerful assistance.

Thus is it with Falstaff—to the last he remains the same, unrepentant, unreformed; and, though shaken off by all that is valuable or good around him, dies the very sensualist which he had lived!

We may, therefore, derive from this character as much instruction as entertainment; and, to the delight which we receive from the contemplation of a picture so rich and original, add a lesson of morality as awful and impressive as the history of human frailty can present.

In order fully to unfold the extraordinary character of Falstaff, it was necessary to throw around him a set of familiar associates, who might, through all the privacies of domestic life, lay open his follies and knaveries, while, at the same time, they themselves contributed, in no small degree, to the amusement of the scene. How admirably the poet has succeeded in this design, the spirited and glowing sketches of Bardolph, Pistol, and Mrs. Quickly, and of Justices Shallow and Silence, will bear an ever-during testimony. Than the scenes in which the two magistrates appear, nothing can be conceived more characteristically pleasant and original. The garrulity, vanity, and knavish simplicity of Shallow; the asinine gravity of Silence when sober, and his irrepressible hilarity when tipsy; Falstaff's exquisite appreciation of their characters, and his patronage of Shallow, are presented to us with a naïveté, raciness, and completeness of conception, which it is in vain to look for elsewhere.

We have further to remark, that the fable of the Two Parts of Henry the Fourth is connected with peculiar skill through the intervention of the comic incidents. It was essential, in fact, for the purposes of representation, that there should be a satisfactory close to each Part, while, at the same time, such a medium of communication should exist between the two, as to form a perfect whole. To effect this, the serious and the ludicrous departments of these dramas are conducted in a different way; the former exhibiting two catastrophes, while the latter has but one. Thus the death of Percy in the first play, and the death of Henry the Fourth in the second, form two judicious terminations of the tragic portion, while the rich vein of comedy running through both divisions is only bounded by the Reformation of Henry the Fifth, and the Fall of his vicious but facetious companion; a denouement at once natural and complete, and springing from intrinsic causes, being the sole result of firmness and penetration in the prince, and of self-delusion in the knight.

14. **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: 1597.** We are inclined to prefer this date to that of 1598, in consequence of the two allusions to time noticed by Mr. Chalmers in his Chronology; and which, as the epoch formerly fixed on by

the commentators was founded merely on the fact of this play being registered on the 22d of July, 1598, a circumstance perfectly indecisive as to the period of its composition, ought consequently to possess the privilege of establishing its era.

Of the three plots which constitute this very interesting drama, namely that of the Caskets, that of the Bond, and that of the Elopement of Jessica, the first two appear to have formed the fable of a play entitled *The Jew*, long anterior to our author's production. "The Jew shown at the Bull," says Gosson in his "School of Abuse," 1579, "representing the greediness of worldly choosers, and the bloody minds of usurers——these plays," says he, mentioning others at the same time, "are goode and sweete plays."

Now, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare, in conformity to his usual custom, would avail himself of the labours of this his dramatic predecessor; but it is also evident that he had other resources.

"The author of the old play of *The Jew*," observes Mr. Douce, "and Shakspeare in his *Merchant of Venice*, have not confined themselves to one source only in the construction of their plot; but, that the *Pecorone*, the *Gesta Romanorum*, and perhaps the old Ballad of Gernutus, have been respectively resorted to. It is however most probable that the original play was indebted chiefly, if not altogether, to the *Gesta Romanorum*, which contained both the main incidents; and that Shakspeare expanded and improved them, partly from his own genius, and partly, as to the bond, from the *Pecorone*, where the coincidences are too manifest to leave any doubt. Thus, the scene being laid at Venice; the residence of the lady at Belmont; the introduction of a person bound for the principal; the double infraction of the bond, viz. the taking more or less than a pound of flesh and the shedding of blood, together with the after-incident of the ring, are common to the novel and the play. The whetting of the knife might perhaps have been taken from the Ballad of Gernutus. Shakspeare was likewise indebted to an authority that could not have occurred to the original author of the play in an English form; this was, Silvan's 'Orator,' as translated by Munday. From that work Shylock's reasoning before the senate is evidently borrowed; but at the same time it has been most skilfully improved.'

The *Orator* of Silvan, translated by Munday from the French, was printed by Adam Islip in 1596, and forms one of Mr. Chalmers's authorities for assigning the composition of the *Merchant of Venice* to the year 1597.

Of the two English *Gesta* mentioned by Mr. Douce, that containing the story of the Bond is as old as the reign of Henry the Sixth, and though now only known to exist in manuscript,* might probably have been in print in the time of Shakspeare and the author of the elder play.

The *Gesta*, including the story of the Caskets, there is reason to think, was translated by Leland and revised by R. Robinson; for a memorandum relative to the first edition of the improved version, written by Robinson himself, and occurring in his "Eupolemia," is thus worded:—"1577. A record of ancient historyes intituled in Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, translated (auctore ut supponitur Johane Leylando antiquario) by mee perused corrected and bettered. Perused further by the wardens of the stationer's and printed first and last by Thomas Easte." If the supposition here recorded be correct, it is highly probable that Leland's translation is identical with that referred to by Mr. Warton and Dr. Farmer as printed by Wynkyn de Worde without date; though it must be remarked, that neither Mr. Herbert, nor Mr. Douce, nor Mr. Dibdin has been fortunate enough to discover such an impression.†

As many of the incidents in the Bond story of the *Merchant of Venice* possess a more striking resemblance to the first tale of the fourth day in "Il *Pecorone*" of Ser Giovanni, than to either the *Gesta*, the Ballad of Gernutus, or the *Orator* of Silvan, the probability is, that a version of this tale, if not of the entire col-

* Preserved in the Harleian Collection, No. 7333, and containing 70 stories.

† "I have examined numerous bibliographical treatises and catalogues for this edition," says Mr. Dibdin, "without effect. It does not appear to have been in Dr. Farmer's own collection."—*Typographical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 366.

lection, was extant in Shakspeare's days. Il Pecorone, though written almost two centuries before, was not published until 1558, when the first edition came forth at Milan.

The love and elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo have been noticed by Mr. Dunlop as bearing a similitude to the fourteenth tale of the second book of the "Novellino" of Massuccio Di Salerno; but it must be recollected, that until the play alluded to by Gosson can be produced, it is impossible to ascertain to whom Shakspeare is most peculiarly indebted for the materials of his complicated plot.

There is much reason to conclude, however, that the felicitous union of the two principal actions of this drama, that concatenation of cause and effect, which has formed them into a whole, is to be ascribed, almost exclusively, to the judgment and the art of Shakspeare. There is also another unity of equal moment, seldom found wanting, indeed, in any of the genuine plays of our poet, but which is peculiarly observable in this, that unity of feeling which we have once before had occasion to notice, and which, in the present instance, has given an uniform, but an extraordinary, tone to every part of the fable. Thus the unparalleled nature of the trial between the Jew and his debtor required, in order to produce that species of dramatic consistency so essential to the illusion of the reader or spectator, that the other important incident of the piece should assume an equal cast of singularity; the enigma, therefore, of the caskets is a most suitable counterpart to the savage eccentricity of the bond, and their skilful combination effects the probability arising from similitude of nature and intimacy of connection.

Yet the ingenuity of the fable is surpassed by the truth and originality of the characters that carry it into execution. Avarice and revenge, the prominent vices of Shylock, are painted with a pencil so discriminating, as to appear very distinct from the same passions in the bosom of a Christian. The peculiar circumstances, indeed, under which the Jews have been placed for so many centuries, would of themselves be sufficient, were the national feelings correctly caught, to throw a peculiar colouring over all their actions and emotions; but to these were unhappily added, in the age of Shakspeare, the most rooted prejudices and antipathies; an aversion, indeed, partaking of hatred and horror, was indulged against this persecuted people, and consequently the picture which Shakspeare has drawn exhibits not only a faithful representation of Jewish sentiments and manners, the necessary result of a singular dispensation of Providence, but it embodies in colours, of almost preternatural strength, the Jew as he appeared to the eye of the shuddering Christian.

In Shylock, therefore, while we behold the manners and the associations of the Hebrew mingling with every thing he says and does, and touched with a verisimilitude and precision which excite our astonishment, we, at the same time, perceive, that, influenced by the prepossessions above-mentioned, the poet has clothed him with passions which would not derogate from a personification of the evil principle itself. He is, in fact, in all the lighter parts of his character, a generical exemplar of Judaism, but demonized, individualized, and rendered awfully striking and horribly appalling by the attribution of such unrelenting malice, as we will hope, for the honour of our species, was never yet accumulated, with such intensity, in any human breast.

So vigorous, however, so masterly is the delineation of this Satanic character, and so exactly did it, until of late years, chime in with the bigotry of the Christian world, that no one of our author's plays has experienced greater popularity. Fortunately the time has now arrived when the Jew and the Christian can meet with all the feelings of humanity about them; a state of society which, more than any other, is calculated to effect that conversion for which every disciple of our blessed religion will assuredly pray.

There is, also, to be found in this beautiful play a charm for the most gentle and amiable minds, a vein of dignified melancholy and pensive sweetness which endears it to every heart, and which fascinates the more as affording

the most welcome relief to the merciless conduct of its leading character: What, for instance, can be more soothing and delightful to the feelings, than the generous and disinterested friendship of Antonio, when contrasted with the hard and selfish nature of Shylock; what more noble than the sublime resignation of the merchant, when opposed to the deadly and relentless hatred of his prosecutor! Never was friendship painted more intense and lovely than in the parting scene of Antonio and Bassanio; Salarino, speaking of the former, says,—

“ A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part :
Bassanio told him, he would make some speed
Of his return : he answer’d—‘ Do not so,’ &c. Act ii. sc. 8.

Nor do the female personages of the drama contribute less to this grateful effect; the sensible, the spirited, the eloquent Portia, who has a principal share in the business of both plots, is equally distinguished for the tenderness of her disposition and the goodness of her heart, and her pleadings for mercy in behalf of the injured Antonio will dwell on the ear of pity and admiration to the last syllable of recorded time.

With a similar result do we enter into the character of Jessica, whose artlessness, simplicity, and affectionate temper excite, in an uncommon degree, the interest of this reader. The opening of the fifth act, where Lorenzo and Jessica are represented conversing on a summer’s night, in the avenue at Belmont, and listening with rapture to the sounds of music, produces, occurring as it does immediately after the soul-harrowing scene in the court of justice, the most enchanting emotion; it breathes, indeed, a repose so soft and delicious, that the mind seems dissolving in tranquil luxury:

“ How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank !
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears ; soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.” Act v. sc. 1.

Shakspeare was an enthusiast in music in a musical age; and though his subsequent encomium upon it be somewhat extravagant, and his reprobation of the man who “is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,” undeservedly harsh and severe, yet are they both more applicable and judicious than the flippant and indiscriminating censure of Mr. Steevens, whose note on the subject has met with its due castigation from the pen of Mr. Douce, who after stigmatising the commentator’s disingenuous effort to throw an odium on this recreation, in conjunction with the feeble aid of an illiberal passage from Lord Chesterfield’s Letters, justly and beautifully adds, that

“ It is a science which, from its intimate and natural connexion with poetry and painting, deserves the highest attention and respect. He that is happily qualified to appreciate the better parts of music, will never seek them in the society so emphatically reprobated by the noble lord, nor altogether in the way he recommends. He will not lend an ear to the vulgarity and tumultuous roar of the tavern catch, or the delusive sounds of martial clangour; but he will enjoy this heavenly gift, this exquisite and soul-delighting sensation, in the temples of his God, or in the peaceful circles of domestic happiness: he will pursue the blessings and advantages of it with ardour, and turn aside from its abuses.” *

The fifth act of this play, which consists of but one scene, appears to have been intended by the poet to remove the painful impressions incident to the nature of his previous plot; it is light, elegant, and beautifully written, and, though the main business of the drama finishes with the termination of the fourth act, it is not felt as an incumbrance, but on the contrary is beheld and enjoyed as a graceful, animated, and consolatory close to one of the most perfect productions of its author.

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 269, 270.

15. **HAMLET : 1597.** That this tragedy had been performed before 1598 is evident from Gabriel Harvey's note in Speght's edition of Chaucer, as quoted by Mr. Malone ; and, from the intimations of time brought forward by Mr. Chalmers, we are induced to adopt the era of this gentleman, placing the first sketch of Hamlet early in 1597, and its revision with additions in 1600. Soon after which, namely, on the 26th of July, 1602, it was entered on the Stationers' book, the first edition hitherto discovered being printed in the year 1604.

No character in our author's plays has occasioned so much perplexity, as that of Hamlet. Yet we think it may be proved that Shakspeare had a clear and definite idea of it throughout all its seeming inconsistencies, and that a very few lines taken from one of the monologues of this tragedy, will develop the ruling and efficient feature which the poet held steadily in his view, and through whose unintermitting influence every other part of the portrait has received a peculiar modification. We are told, as the result of a deep but unsatisfactory meditation on the mysteries of another world, on "the dread of something after death," that

— " Thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the *pale cast of thought* ;
And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action." Act iii. sc. 1.

Now this pale cast of thought and its consequences, which, had not Hamlet been interrupted by the entrance of Ophelia, he would have himself applied to his own singular situation, form the very essence, and give rise to the prominent defects of his character. It is evident, therefore, that Shakspeare intended to represent him as variable and indecisive in action, and that he has founded this want of volition on one of those peculiar constitutions of the mental and moral faculties which have been designated by the appellation of genius, a combination of passions and associations which has led to all the useful energies, and all the exalted eccentricities of human life ; and of which, in one of its most exquisite but speculative forms, Hamlet presents us with perhaps the only instance on theatric record.

To a frame of mind naturally strong and contemplative, but rendered by extraordinary events sceptical and intensely thoughtful, he unites an undeviating love of rectitude, a disposition of the gentlest kind, feelings the most delicate and pure, and a sensibility painfully alive to the smallest deviation from virtue or propriety of conduct. Thus, while gifted to discern and to suffer from every moral aberration in those who surround him, his powers of action are paralysed in the first instance, by the unconquerable tendency of his mind to explore, to their utmost ramification, all the bearings and contingencies of the meditated deed ; and in the second, by that tenderness of his nature which leads him to shrink from the means which are necessary to carry it into execution. Over this irresolution and weakness, the result, in a great measure, of emotions highly amiable, and which in a more congenial situation had contributed to the delight of all who approached him, Shakspeare has thrown a veil of melancholy so sublime and intellectual, as by this means to constitute him as much the idol of the philosopher, and the man of cultivated taste, as he confessedly is of those who feel their interest excited principally through the medium of the sympathy and compassion which his ineffectual struggles to act up to his own approved purpose naturally call forth.

It may be useful, however, in order to give more strength and precision to this general outline, to enter into a few of the leading particulars of Hamlet's conduct. He is represented at the opening of the play as highly distressed by the sudden death of his father, and the hurried and indecent nuptials of his mother, when the awful appearance of the spectre overwhelms him with astonishment, unhinges a mind already partially thrown off its bias, and fills it with indelible apprehension, suspicion, and dismay. For though, on the first communication of the murder, his bosom burns with the thirst of vengeance, yet reflection and the gen-

tleness of his disposition soon induce him to regret that he has been chosen as the instrument of effecting it,

“ That ever he was born to set it right ;”

and then, under the influence of this reluctance, he begins to question the validity and the lawfulness of the medium through which he had received his information, describing with admirable self-consciousness the vacillation of his will, and the tendency of his temper : —

“ The spirit that I have seen
May be the Devil, and the Devil hath power
T’ assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,—
Abuses me to damn me.” Act ii. sc. 2.

Here, therefore, on a structure of mind originally indecisive as to volition, on feelings rendered more than usually sensitive and serious by domestic misfortune, operate causes calculated, in a very extraordinary degree, to augment the sources of irresolution and distress. The imagination of Hamlet, agitated and inflamed by a visitation from the world of spirits, is lost amid the mazes of conjecture, amid thoughts which roam with doubt and terror through all the labyrinths of fate and superhuman agency ; whilst, at the same time, indignation at the crime of his uncle, and aversion to the vindictive task which has been imposed upon him, raise a conflict of passion within his breast.

Determined, however, if possible, to obey what seems both a commission from heaven, and a necessary filial duty : but sensible that the wild workings of imagination, and the tumult of contending emotions have so far unsettled his mind, as to render his control over it at times precarious and imperfect, and that consequently he may be liable to betray his purpose, he adopts the expedient of counterfeiting madness, in order that if any thing should escape him in an unguarded moment, it may, from being considered as the effect of derangement, fail to impede his designs.

And here again the bitterness of his destiny meets him ; for, with the view of disarming suspicion as to his real intention, he finds it requisite to impress the king and his courtiers with the idea, that disappointed love is the real basis of his disorder ; justly inferring, that as his attachment to Ophelia was known, and still more so the tenderness of his own heart, any harsh treatment of her, without an adequate provocation, must infallibly be deemed a proof, not only of insanity, but of the cause whence it sprang ; since though some reserve on her part had been practised, in obedience to her father’s commands, it could not, without a dereliction of reason, have produced such an entire change in his conduct and disposition. And such indeed would have been the result, had Hamlet possessed a perfect command of himself ; but his feelings overpowered his consistency, and the very part which he had to play with Ophelia, was one of the most excruciating of his afflictions ; for he tells us, and tells us truly, that

“ ‘ He’ lov’d Ophelia ; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up ‘ his’ sum ;” Act v. sc. 1.

consequently what he suffers on this occasion, on this compulsory treatment, as it were, of the being dearest to his heart, gives him one of the strongest claims upon our sympathy. With what agony he pursues this line of conduct, and how foreign it is to every feeling of the man, appears at the close of his celebrated soliloquy on the expediency of suicide, and just previous to the rudest and most sarcastic instance of his behaviour towards Ophelia. That hapless maiden suddenly crosses him, when, starting at her sight, and forgetting his assumed character, he exclaims, in an exquisite tone of solemnity and pathos—

"Soft you, now!
 The fair Ophelia!—Nymph, in thy orisons
 Be all my sins remember'd." Act iii. sc. 1.

It is impossible, we think, to compare this passage, this burst of undistinguished emotion, with the tenour of the immediately subsequent dialogue, without the deepest commiseration for the fate of the unfortunate prince.

In this play, as in *King Lear*, we have madness under its real and its assumed aspect, and in both instances they are accurately discriminated. We find Lear and Ophelia constantly recurring, either directly or indirectly, to the actual causes of their distress; but it was the business of Edgar and of Hamlet, to place their observers on a wrong scent, and to divert their vigilance from the genuine sources of their grief, and the objects of their pursuit. This is done with undeviating firmness by Edgar; but Hamlet occasionally suffers the poignancy of his feelings, and the agitation of his mind, to break in upon his plan, when, heedless of what was to be the ostensible foundation of his derangement, his love for Ophelia, he permits his indignation to point, and on one occasion almost unmasked, towards the guilt of his uncle. In every other instance, he personates insanity with a skill which indicates the highest order of genius, and imposes on all but the king, whose conscience, perpetually on the watch, soon enables him to detect the inconsistencies and the drift of his nephew.

It has been objected to the character of Hamlet, whose most striking feature is profound melancholy, that its keeping is broken in upon by an injudicious admixture of humour and gaiety; but he who is acquainted with the workings of the human heart, will be far, very far indeed, from considering this as any deviation from the truth of nature. Melancholy, when not the offspring of an ill-spent life, or of an habitual bad temper, but the consequence of mere casualties and misfortunes, or of the vices and passions of others, operating on feelings too gentle, delicate, and susceptible, to bear up against the ruder evils of existence, will sometimes spring with playful elasticity from the pressure of the heaviest burden, and dissipating, for a moment, the anguish of a breaking heart, will, like a sun-beam in a winter's day, illumine all around it with a bright, but transient ray, with the sallies of humorous wit, and even with the hilarity of sportive simplicity; an interchange which serves but to render the returning storm more deep and gloomy.

Thus it is with Hamlet in those parts of this inimitable tragedy in which we behold him suddenly deviating into mirth and jocularly; they are scintillations which only light us

"to discover sights of woe,
 Regions of sorrow," *

for no where do we perceive the depth of his affliction and the energy of his sufferings more distinctly than when under these convulsive efforts to shake off the incumbent load.

Of that infirmity of purpose which distinguishes Hamlet during the pursuit of his revenge, and of that exquisite self-deceit by which he endeavours to disguise his own motives from himself, no clearer instance can be given, than from the scene where he declines destroying the usurper because he was in the act of prayer, and might therefore go to heaven, deferring his death to a period when, being in liquor or in anger, he was thoroughly ripe for perdition; an enormity of sentiment and design totally abhorrent to the real character of Hamlet, which was radically amiable, gentle, and compassionate, but affording a striking proof of that hypocrisy which, owing to the untowardness of his fate, he was constantly exercising on himself. Struck with the symptoms of repentance in Claudius, his resentment becomes softened; and at all times unwilling, from the tenderness of his nature, and the acuteness of his sensibility, to fulfil his supposed duty, and execute retributive justice on his uncle, he endeavours to find some excuse for his conscious want

* *Paradise Lost*, book i. l. 64.

of resolution, some pretext, however far-fetched or discordant with the genuine motive, to shield him from his own weakness.

One remarkable effect of this perpetual contest in the bosom of Hamlet between a sense of the duty, enjoined as it were by heaven, and his aversion to the means which could alone secure its accomplishment, has been to throw an interest around him of the most powerful and exciting nature. It is an interest not arising from extrinsic causes, from any anxiety as to the completion of the meditated vengeance, or from the intervention of any casual incidents which may tend to hasten or retard the catastrophe, but exclusively springing from our attachment to the person of Hamlet. We contemplate with a mixture of admiration and compassion the very virtues of Hamlet becoming the bane of his earthly peace, virtues which, in the tranquillity either of public or private life, would have crowned him with love and honour, serving but, in the tempest which assails him, to wreck his hopes, and accelerate his destruction. In fact, the very doubts and irresolution of Hamlet endear him to our hearts, and at the same time condense around him an almost breathless anxiety, for, while we confess them to be the offspring of all that is lovely, gentle, and kind, we cannot but perceive their fatal tendency, and we shudder at the probable event.

It is thus that the character of Hamlet, notwithstanding the veil of meditative abstraction which the genius of philosophic melancholy has thrown over it, possesses a species of enchantment for all ranks and classes. Its popularity, indeed, appears to have been immediate and great, for, in 1604, Anthony Scoloker, in a dedication to his poem, entitled "*Daiphantus*," tells us, that his "*epistles*" should be "*like friendly Shake-speare's tragedies, where the commedian rides, when the tragedian stands on tiptoe: Faith it should please all, like prince Hamlet.*"

We should bear in mind, however, that the favour of the public must, in part, have been attached to this play through the vast variety of incident and characters which it unfolds, from its rapid interchange of solemnity, pathos, and humour, and more particularly from the awful, yet grateful terror which the shade of buried Denmark diffuses over the scene.

That a belief in Spiritual Agency has been universally and strongly impressed on the mind of man from the earliest ages of the world, must be evident to every one who peruses the writings of the Old Testament. It is equally clear that, with little but exterior modification, this doctrine has passed from the East into Europe, flowing through Greece and Rome to modern times. It is necessary, however, to a just comprehension of the subject, that it be distinctly separated into two branches,—into the Agency of Angelic Spirits, and into the Agency of the Spirits of the Departed, as these will be found to rest on very dissimilar bases.

To the Agency of Angelic Spirits, both good and bad, and to their operation on and influence over the intellect and affairs of men, the records of our religion bear the most direct and undubitable testimony; nor is it possible to disjoin a full admission of this intercourse from any faith in its scriptures, whether Jewish or Christian.

"That the holy angels," observes Bishop Horsley, "are often employed by God in his government of this sublunary world, is indeed clearly to be proved by holy writ: that they have powers over the matter of the universe analogous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared: but it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ, from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a prescribed extent. That the evil angels possessed, before the Fall, the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. That they have a power over the human sensory (which is part of the material universe), which they are occasionally permitted to exercise, by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptations, must also be admitted." *

* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 369.

Of a doctrine so consolatory as the ministration and guardianship of benevolent spirits, one of the most striking instances is afforded us by the Book of Job, perhaps the most ancient composition in existence; it is where Elihu, describing the sick man on his bed, declares, that—

“ As his soul draweth near to the Grave,
And his life to the Ministers of Death,
Surely will there be over him an *Angel*,
An *Intercessor*, one of *The Thousand*,
Who shall instruct the Sufferer in his duty;” *

and from the same source was the awful but monitory vision described in the fourth chapter of this sublime poem.

Subsequent poets have embraced with avidity a system so friendly to man, and so delightful to an ardent and devotional imagination. Thus Hesiod, repeating the oriental tradition, seems happy in augmenting the number of our heavenly protectors to thirty thousand, Τρὶς γὰρ μύριοι:—

“ Invisible the Gods are ever nigh,
Pass through the midst and bend th’ all-seeing eye:
The men who grind the poor, who wrest the right,
Awless of Heaven’s revenge, are naked to their sight.
For *thrice ten thousand* holy Demons rove
This breathing world, the delegates of Jove.
Guardians of man, their glance alike surveys,
The upright judgments, and th’ unrighteous ways.” ELTON.

But, next to the sacred writers, and more immediately derived from their inspiration, has this heavenly superintendence been best described by two of our own poets: by Spenser, with his customary piety, sweetness, and simplicity:—

“ And is there care in heaven? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,” &c.†

by Milton, in a strain of greater sublimity, and with more philosophic dignity and grace:—

“ Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:” &c. ‡

But mankind, not satisfied with this angelic interposition, though founded on indisputable authority, and exercised on their behalf, has, in every age and nation, fondly clung to the idea, that the souls or Spirits of the Dead have also a communication with the living, and that they occasionally, either as happy or as suffering shades, re-appear on this sublunary scene.

The common suggestions and associations of the human mind have laid the foundation for this general belief; man has ever indulged the hope of another state of existence, feeling within him an assurance, a kind of intuitive conviction, emanating from the Deity, that we are not destined as the beasts to perish. It is true, says Homer.

“ ’Tis true, ’tis certain, man though dead, retains
Part of himself; th’ immortal mind remains;” §

but to this mental immortality, which is firmly sanctioned by religion, affection,

* Vide Good’s Translation of Job, part v. chap. 33, ver. 22, 23.—I have ventured to alter the language, though I have strictly adhered to the import of the last line. *Ministers of Death* have also been substituted for *Destinies*.

† Vide Todd’s Spenser, vol. iv. p. 1, 2, 3. *Faerie Queene*, book ii. canto 8. stanz. 1 and 2.

‡ Todd’s Milton, vol. iii. p. 138, 139. *Paradise Lost*, book iv. l. 677.—Shakspeare, it may be remarked, occasionally alludes to the same species of spiritual hierarchy, and, in the very play we are engaged upon, Laertes says—

“ A *minist’ring angel* shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.”

Act. v. sc. 1.

§ Pope’s *Iliad*, book xxiii.

grief, and superstition have added a vast variety of unauthorised circumstances. The passions and attachments which were incident to the individual in his earthly, are attributed to him in his spiritual state; he is supposed to be still agitated by terrestrial objects and relations, to delight in the scenes which he formerly inhabited, to feel for and to protect the persons with whom he was formerly connected, to be actuated, in short, by emotions of love, anger, and revenge, and to be in a situation which admits of receiving benefit or augmented suffering through the attentions or negligence of surviving friends. Accordingly, the spirit or apparition of the deceased was supposed occasionally to revisit the glimpses of the moon, and to become visible to its dearest relatives or associates, for the purpose of admonishing, complaining, imploring, warning, or directing.

Now all these additions to the abstract idea of immortality, though perhaps naturally arising from the affectionate regrets, the conscious weakness, and the eager curiosity of man, and therefore universal as his diffusion over the globe, are totally unwarranted by our only safe and sure guide, the records of the Bible; for though we are taught that man exists in another state, and disembodied of the organs which he possessed whilst an inhabitant of this planet, we are also told, that he is supplied with a new body, of a very different nature, and, without a miracle, indiscernible by our present senses. We are told by St. Peter, that even the body of our Saviour after his resurrection could only be seen through the operation of a miracle: "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be visible: Et dedit eum manifestum fieri." Vulg. "He was no longer," observes Bishop Horsley, "in a state to be naturally visible to any man. His body was indeed risen, but it was become that body which St. Paul describes in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, which, having no sympathy with the gross bodies of this earthly sphere, nor any place among them, must be indiscernible to the human organs, till they shall have undergone a similar refinement."*

We have no foundation, therefore, in Scripture, nor according to its doctrine, can we have, for attaching credibility to the re-appearance of the Departed; yet, independent of the predisposition of the human mind, from the influence of affectionate regret, to think upon the dead as if still present to our wants and wishes, a state of feeling which, in Celtic poetry, has given birth to an interesting system of mythology entirely built on apparitional intercourse, † the relations which we possess of the apparent return of the dead, are so numerous, and, in many instances, so unexceptionably attested, that they have led to several ingenious, and, indeed, partially successful attempts to account for them. One or two of these attempts, as terminating in some curious speculations on the character of Hamlet, and on the apparition of his father, it will be necessary more particularly to notice.

A firm belief in Visitation from the Spirits of the Deceased was so strong a feature in the age of Shakspeare, and the immediately subsequent period, and was supported by such an accumulation of testimony, that it roused the exertions of a few individuals of a philosophical turn of mind, to account for what they would not venture to deny; Lavaterus ‡ and others on the Continent, and Scot § and Mede ** in our own country, attempting to prove that these appearances were not occasioned by the return of the dead, but by the permitted and personal agency

* Horsley's Nine Sermons on the Nature of the Evidence by which the Fact of our Lord's Resurrection is established, p. 209.

† See an elegant and very satisfactory Dissertation on the "Mythology of the Poems of Ossian," by Professor Richardson of Glasgow, in Graham's "Essay on the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian." 8vo. 1807.

‡ Lavaterus was translated into English by R. H. and printed by Henry Benneyman, in 1572. 4to.

§ See his Treatise on Divels and Spirits, annexed to his Discoverie of Witchcraft, 4to. 1584.

** Mede was born in 1586 and died in 1638, and the doctrine in question is to be found in the fortieth of his fifty-three Discourses, published after his decease.

of good or evil angels, who, as we occasionally find in Scripture, and more particularly in the case of Samuel, before the Witch of Endor, were allowed to assume the resemblance of the deceased.

But, though this hypothesis be constructed on a species of spiritual agency which we know to have existed, yet are the instances for which it is adopted by these writers much too trivial and frequent to secure to their solution a rational assent; nor is the presence of these superior intelligences, as objects of sight, at all necessary to account for the phenomena in question.

For it is obvious, that if relying, with Bishop Horsley, on the evidence of sacred history, we believe that the Deity oftentimes acts mediately, through his agents, on the human sensory, as a part of the material universe, thereby producing diseases and morbid impressions, the same effects will result. Not that we conceive matter can, in any degree, modify the thinking principle itself, but its organisation being the sole medium through which the intellect communicates with the external world, it is evident that any derangement of the structure of the brain must render the perceptions of the mind, as to material existences, imperfect, false, and illusory.

It is remarkable that a doctrine similar to this was produced in the last century to account for the spectral appearances of second sight, by a Scotchman too, himself an Islander, who has furnished us with an ample collection of instances of this singular visitation;* this gentleman contending, that these prophetic scenes are exhibited not to the sight, but merely to the imagination. He adds, with great sagacity,

“As these Representations or waking Dreams, according to the best Enquiry I could make, are communicated (unless it be seldom) but to one Person at once, though there should be several Persons, and even some Seers in Company, those Representations seem rather communicated to the Imagination (as said is) than the Organ of Sight; seeing it is impossible, if made always to the latter, but all Persons directing their sight the same Way, having their Faculty of Sight alike perfect and equally disposed, must see it in common.”†

We must refer, however, to the present day for demonstration, founded on actual experience, that the appearance of ghosts and apparitions is, in every instance, the immediate effect of certain partial but morbid affections of the brain; yet, it must be remarked, that the ingenious physiologists who have proved this curious fact, entirely confine themselves, and perhaps very justly, to physical phenomena, professedly discarding the consideration of any higher efficiency in the series of causation than what appears as the result of diseased organisation; so that their discovery, though completely overturning the common superstition as to the return of the departed spirit, or the visible interference of angelic agency, is yet very reconcileable with the pneumatology of Bishop Horsley.

In 1805, Dr. Alderson of Hull read to the Literary Society of that place, and published in 1811, an Essay on Apparitions, the object of which is to prove that the immediate cause of these spectral visitations “lies, not in the perturbed spirits of the departed, but in the diseased organisation of the living.” For this purpose he relates several cases of this hallucination which fell under his own observation and treatment, and which, as distinguished from partial insanity, from delirium, somnambulism, and reverie, were completely removed by medical means.

In 1813, Dr. Ferriar of Manchester published, on a more extended scale, “An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions;” whose aim and result are precisely similar to the anterior production of Dr. Alderson; both admitting the reality and universality of spectral impressions, and both attributing them to partial affections of the brain, independent of any sensible external agency; it is also remarkable that both have applied their speculations and experience in illustration of the

* “A Treatise on the Second Sight, Dreams, Apparitions, &c. By Theophilus Insulanus.” Svo. Edinb. 1763.

† Reprint of 1815, annexed to Kirk’s “Secret Commonwealth,” p. 74.

character of Hamlet, a circumstance which has, in a great measure, led to these general observations on the progress of opinion as to the nature of apparitional visitation.

The state of mind which Shakspeare exhibits to us in Hamlet, as the consequence of conflicting passions and events, operating on a frame of acute sensibility, Dr. Ferriar has termed latent lunacy.

“The subject of latent lunacy,” he remarks, “is an untouched field, which would afford the richest harvest to a skilful and diligent observer. Cervantes has immortalized himself, by displaying the effect of one bad species of composition on the hero of his satire, and Butler has delineated the evils of epidemic, religious, and political frenzy; but it remains as a task for some delicate pencil, to trace the miseries introduced into private families, by a state of mind, which ‘sees more devils that vast hell can hold,’ and which yet affords no proof of derangement, sufficient to justify the seclusion of the unhappy invalid.

“This is a species of distress, on which no novelist has ever touched, though it is unfortunately increasing in real life; though it may be associated with worth, with genius, and with the most specious demonstrations (for a while) of general excellence.

“Addison has thrown out a few hints on this subject in one of the Spectators; it could not escape so critical an observer of human infirmities; and I have always supposed, that if the character of Sir Roger de Coverley had been left untouched by Steele, it would have exhibited some interesting traits of this nature. As it now appears, we see nothing more than occasional absence of mind; and the peculiarities of an humourist, contracted by retirement, and by the obsequiousness of his dependants.

“It has often occurred to me, that Shakspeare’s character of Hamlet can only be understood on this principle. He feigns madness, for political purposes, while the poet means to represent his understanding as really (and unconsciously to himself) unhinged by the cruel circumstances in which he is placed. The horror of the communication made by his father’s spectre; the necessity of belying his attachment to an innocent and deserving object; the certainty of his mother’s guilt; and the supernatural impulse by which he is goaded to an act of assassination, abhorrent to his nature, are causes sufficient to overwhelm and distract a mind previously disposed to ‘weakness and to melancholy,’ and originally full of tenderness and natural affection. By referring to the book, it will be seen, that his real insanity is only developed after the mock play. Then, in place of a systematic conduct, conducive to his purposes, he becomes irresolute, inconsequent, and the plot appears to stand unaccountably still. Instead of striking at his object, he resigns himself to the current of events, and sinks at length, ignobly, under the stream.” *

Dr. Alderson, alluding to the common but cogent argument against a belief in Ghosts, “that only one man at a time ever saw a ghost, therefore, the probability is, that there never was such a thing,” adds, in reference to the character of Hamlet, and to Shakspeare’s management of his supernatural machinery, the following observations:—

* Essay on the Theory of Apparitions, p. 111—115.—The following very curious instance of a striking renewal of terrific impressions, is given by the Doctor in this entertaining little work: it was communicated to him, he tells us, by the gentleman who underwent the deception:—“He was benighted, while travelling alone, in a remote part of the Highlands of Scotland, and was compelled to ask shelter for the evening at a small lonely hut. When he was to be conducted to his bed-room, the landlady observed, with mysterious reluctance, that he would find the window very insecure. On examination, part of the wall appeared to have been broken down, to enlarge the opening. After some enquiry, he was told, that a pedlar, who had lodged in the room a short time before, had committed suicide, and was found hanging behind the door, in the morning. According to the superstition of the country, it was deemed improper to remove the body through the door of the house; and to convey it through the window was impossible, without removing part of the wall. Some hints were dropped, that the room had been subsequently haunted by the poor man’s spirit.

“My friend laid his arms, properly prepared against intrusion of any kind, by the bedside, and retired to rest, not without some degree of apprehension. He was visited, in a dream, by a frightful apparition, and awaking in agony, found himself sitting up in bed, with a pistol grasped in his right hand. On casting a fearful glance round the room, he discovered, by the moon-light, a corpse, dressed in a shroud, reared erect, against the wall, close by the window. With much difficulty, he summoned up resolution to approach the dismal object, the features of which, and the minutest parts of its funeral apparel, he perceived distinctly. He passed one hand over it; felt nothing; and staggered back to the bed. After a long interval, and much reasoning with himself, he renewed his investigation, and at length discovered that the object of his terror was produced by the moon-beams, forming a long, bright image, through the broken window, on which his fancy, impressed by his dream, had pictured, with mischievous accuracy, the lineaments of a body prepared for interment. Powerful associations of terror, in this instance, had excited the recollected images with uncommon force and effect.” P. 24—28.

“From what I have related, it will be seen why it should happen, that only one at a time ever could see a ghost; and here we may lament, that our celebrated poet, whose knowledge of nature is every Englishman’s boast, had not known such cases, and their causes as those I have related; he would not then, perhaps, have made his ghosts visible and audible on the stage. Every expression, every look in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, is perfectly natural and consistent with men so agitated, and quite sufficient to convince us of what they suffer, see, and hear; but it must be evident, that the disease being confined solely to the individual, such objects must be seen and heard only by the individual. That men so circumstanced as *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, *Brutus* and *Dion*, should see phantoms and hold converse with them, appears to me perfectly natural; and, though the cases I have now related owe their origin entirely to a disordered state of bodily organs, as may be evidently inferred by the history of their rise, and the result of their cure, yet, with the knowledge we have of the effects of mind on the body, we may be fairly led to conclude, that great mental anxiety, inordinate ambition, and guilt may produce similar effects.” *

“If Shakspeare, more philosopher than poet, had pursued the plan which Dr. Alderson has recommended, he would have injured his tragedy, and wrecked his popularity. We could have spared, indeed, any ocular demonstration of the mute and blood-boulted ghost of *Banquo* in *Macbeth*, but had the ghost in *Hamlet* been invisible and inaudible, we should have lost the noblest scene of grateful terror which genius has ever created.

Nor was it ignorance on the part of Shakspeare which gave birth to the visibility of this awful spectre, for he has told us, in another place, that

“Such shadows are the weak brain’s forgeries.” †

and, even in the very play under consideration, he calls them “the very coinage of the brain,” and adds, —

“This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in;”

but he well knew, that as a dramatic poet, in a superstitious age, it was requisite, in order to produce a strong and general impression, to adopt the popular creed, the superstition relative to his subject; and, as Mrs. Montagu has justly observed, “the poet who does so, understands his business much better than the critic, who, in judging of that work, refuses it his attention. — Thus every operation that develops the attributes, which vulgar opinion, or the nurse’s legend, have taught us to ascribe to ‘such a preternatural Being,’ will augment our pleasure; whether we give the reins to our imagination, and, as spectators, willingly yield ourselves up to pleasing delusion, or, as ‘judicious’ Critics, examine the merit of the composition.” ‡

That an undoubting belief in the actual appearance of ghosts and apparitions was general in Shakspeare’s time, has been the assertion of all who have alluded to the subject, either as contemporary or subsequent historians. Addison, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, speaking of the credulities of the two preceding centuries, observes, that “our Forefathers looked upon Nature with reverence and horror—that they loved to astonish themselves with the apprehensions of witchcraft, prodigies, charms, and enchantments.—There was not a village in England that had not a ghost in it—the churchyards were all haunted—every common had a circle of fairies belonging to it—and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with who had not seen a spirit;” § and Bourne, who wrote about the same period, and expressly on the subject of vulgar superstitions, tells us that formerly “hobgoblins and sprights were in every city, and town, and village, by every water, and in every wood.—If a house was seated on some melancholy place, or built in some old romantic manner; or if any particular

* Essay on Apparitions, annexed to the fourth edition of his Essay on the *Rhus Toxicodendron*, p. 68, 69.

† Rape of *Lucrece*,

‡ Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare. 8vo, 5th edit. p. 162, 165.

§ Spectator, No. 419.

accident had happened in it, such as murder, sudden death, or the like, to be sure that house had a mark set on it, and was afterwards esteemed the habitation of a ghost.—Stories of this kind are infinite, and there are few villages which have not either had such an house in it, or near it.” *

Such, then, being the superstitious character of the poet's times it was with great judgment that he seized the particulars best adapted to his purpose, moulding them with a skill so perfect, as to render the effect awful beyond all former precedent. A slight attention to the circumstances which accompany the first appearances of the spectre to Horatio and to Hamlet, will place this in a striking point of view.

The solemnity with which this Royal phantom is introduced is beyond measure impressive: Bernardo is about to repeat to the incredulous Horatio what had occurred on the last apparition of the deceased monarch to Marcellus and himself, and thus commences his narrative:—

“ Last night of all,
When yon same star, that's westward from the pole,
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus, and myself,
The bell then beating one :”—

This note of time, the traditionary hour for the appearance of a ghost, and, above all, the mysterious connection between the course of the star, and the visitation of the spirit, usher in the “dreaded sight” with an influence which makes the blood run chill.

A similar correspondence between a natural phenomenon in the heavens, and the agency of a disembodied spirit, occurs, with an effect which has been much admired, in a poem by Lord Byron, where the shade of Francesca, addressing her apostate lover, and directing his attention to the orb of night, exclaims,—

“ There is a light cloud by the moon—
'Tis passing, and will pass full soon—
If, by the time its vapoury sail
Hath ceased her shaded orb to veil,
Thy heart within thee is not changed,
Then God and man are both avenged;
Dark will thy doom be, darker still
Thine immortality of ill.” †

The adjuration and interrogation of the ghost by Horatio and Hamlet, are conducted in conformity to the ceremonies of papal superstition; for it may be remarked, that in many things relative to religious observances, or to the preternatural as connected with religion, Shakspeare has shown such a marked predilection for the imposing exterior, and comprehensive creed of the Roman church, as to lead some of his biographers to suppose that he was himself a Roman Catholic. The adoption, however, is to be attributed to the poetical nature of the materials which the doctrines of Rome supply, and more particularly to the food for imagination which the supposition of an intermediate state, in which the souls of the departed are still connected with, and influenced by, the conduct of man, must necessarily create.

Such a system, it is evident, would very readily admit of some of the oldest and most prevalent superstitions of the heathen world, and would give fresh credibility to the re-appearance of the dead, in order to reveal and to punish some horrible murder, to right the oppressed orphan and the widow, to enjoin the sepulture of the mangled corse, to discover concealed and ill-gotten treasure, to claim the aid of prayer and intercession, to announce the fate of kingdoms, etc. etc. Thus Horatio, addressing the Spectre, alludes to some of these as the probable causes of the dreadful visitation which appals him :—

* Bourne's Antiquities of the Common People, 1725, edition apud Brand, p. 119, 122, 123.

† The Siege of Corinth.

"Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice," &c.

Act i. sc. 1.

With a still higher degree of anxiety, curiosity, and terror, does Hamlet, as might naturally be expected, invoke the spirit of his father; his address being wrought up to the highest tone of amazement and emotion, and clothed with the most vigorous expression of poetry:—

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd," &c.

Act i. sc. 4.

The doubts and queries of this most impressive speech are similar to those which are allowed to be entertained, and directed to be put, by contemporary writers on the subject of apparitions. Thus the English Lavaterus enjoins the person so visited to charge the spirit to "declare and open what he is—who he is, why he is come, and what he desireth;" saying,—“Thou Spirite, we beseech thee by Christ Jesus, tell us what thou art;” and he then orders him to enquire, “What man’s soul he is? for what cause he is come, and what he doth desire? Whether he require any ayde by prayers and suffrages? Whether by massing or almes-giving he may be released?” etc., etc.*

In pursuance of the same judicious plan of adopting the popular conceptions, and giving them dignity and effect, by that philosophy of the supernatural which has been remarked as so peculiarly the gift of Shakspeare,† we find him employing, in these scenes of super-human interference, the traditional notions of his age, relative to the influence of approaching light on departed spirits, as intimated by the crowing of the cock, and the fading lustre of the glow-worm. One of the passages which have so admirably immortalized these superstitions, contains also another not less striking, concerning the supposed sanctity and protecting power of the nights immediately previous to Christmas-Day. On the sudden departure of the Spirit, Bernardo remarks,—

"It was about to speak, when the cock crew.
Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard," &c.

Act i. sc. 1.

"————— Fare thee well at once!"

exclaims the apparition on retiring from the presence of his son,

"The glow-worm shows the matins to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire."

Act i. sc. 5.

This idea of spirits flying the approach of morning, appears from the hymn of "Prudentius," quoted by Bourne, to have been entertained by the Christian world as early as the commencement of the fourth century;‡ but a passage still more closely allied to the lines in Shakspeare, has been adduced by Mr. Douce, from a hymn composed by Saint Ambrose, and formerly used in the Salisbury service.—“It so much resembles,” he observes, “Horatio’s speech, that one might almost suppose Shakspeare had seen them:—

"*Preco diei jam sonat,
Noctis profundæ pervigil;
Nocturna lux viantibus,
A nocte noctem segregans.*

* "Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght," Parte the Seconde, p. 106, 107. 4to. B. L. 1572. From the chapter entitled, "The Papistes doctrine touching the soules of dead men, and the appearing of them."

† Madame De Staël observes, "there is always something philosophical in the supernatural employed by Shakspeare." *The Influence of Literature on Society*, vol. i. p. 297.

‡ *Antiquitates Vulgares* apud Brand, p. 68.—It has been observed by Mr. Steevens, that "this is a very ancient superstition. Philostratus, giving an account of the apparition of Achilles' shade to Apollonius Tyaneus, says that it vanished with a little glimmer as soon as the cock crowed." *Vit. Apol.* iv. 16.

*Hoc excitatus Lucifer,
Solvit polum caligine;
Hoc, omnis errorum chorus
Viam nocendi deserit.
Gallo canente spes redit, &c.**

“The epithets extravagant and erring,” he adds, “are highly poetical and appropriate, and seem to prove that Shakspeare was not altogether ignorant of the Latin language.”

With what awful and mysterious grandeur has he invested the Popish doctrine of purgatory! a doctrine certainly well calculated for poetical purposes, and of which the particulars must have been familiar to him, through the writings of his contemporaries. Thus the English Lavaterus, detailing the opinions of the Roman Catholics on this subject, tells us, that

“Purgatorie is also under the earth as Hell is. Some say that Hell and Purgatorie are both one place, albeit the paines be divers according to the deserts of soules. Furthermore they say, that under the earth there are more places of punishment in which the soules of the dead may be purged. For they say, that this or that soule hath ben seene in this or that mountaine, floud, or valley, where it hath committed the offence: that there are particuler Purgatories assigned unto them for some special cause, before the day of Judgement, after which time all maner of Purgatories, as well general as particuler shal cease. Some of them say, that the paine of Purgatorie is al one with the punishment of Hell, and that they differ only in this, that the one hath an ende, the other no ende: and that it is far more easie to endure all the paynes of this worlde, which al men since Adam’s time have susteined, even unto the day of the last Judgement, than to bear one dayes space the least of those two punishments. Further they holde that our fire, if it be compared with the fire of Purgatorie, doth resemble only a painted fire.” †

From this temporary place of torment, he informs us, that,

“By Gods licence and dispensation, certaine, yea before the day of Judgement, are permitted to come out, and that not for ever, but only for a season, for the instructing and terrifying of the lyving:”—and again:—“Many times in the nyght season, there have beene certaine spirits hearde softly going—who being asked what they were, have made aunswere that they were the soules of this or that man, and that they nowe endure extreame tormentes. If by chaunce any man did aske of them, by what meanes they might be delivered out of those tortures, they have answered, that in case a certaine numbere of Masses were sung for them, or Pilgrimages vowed to some Saintes, or some other such like deedes doone for their sake, that then surely they shoulde be delivered,” ‡

Never was the art of the poet more discoverable, than in the use which has been made of this doctrine in the play before us, and more particularly in the following narrative, which instantly seizes on the mind, and fills it with that indefinite kind of terror that leads to the most horrid imaginings:—

“*Ghost.* My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames,
Must render up myself.” &c.

Act i. sc. 5.

In this hazardous experiment, of placing before our eyes a spirit from the world of departed souls, no one has approached, by many degrees, the excellence of our poet. The shade of Darius, in the Persians of Æschylus, has been satisfactorily shown, by a critic of great ability, to be far inferior; § nor can the ghosts of Ossian, who is justly admired for delineations of this kind, be brought into competition with the Danish spectre; neither the Grecian, nor the Celtic mythology, indeed, affording materials equal, in point of impression, to those which existed for the English bard. We may also venture to affirm, that the management of Shakspeare, in the disposition of his materials, from the first shock which the sentinels receive, to that which Hamlet sustains in the closet of his mother, is perfectly

* “See *Expositio hymnorum secundum usum Sarum*, pr. by R. Pynson, n. d., 4to. fol. vij. b.”

† “Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght,” 1572. The seconde parte, chap. ii. p. 103.

‡ The seconde parte, chap. ii. p. 104; and The first parte, chap. xv. p. 72.

§ See Montagu on the Preternatural Beings of Shakspeare, in her Essay.

unrivalled, and, more than any other, calculated to excite the highest degree of interest, pity, and terror.

It is likewise no small proof of judgment in our poet, that he has only once attempted to unveil, in this direct manner, the awful destiny of the dead, and to embody, as it were, at full length, a missionary from the grave; for the ghost of Banquo, and the spectral appearances in Julius Cæsar and Richard the Third, are slight and powerless sketches, when compared with the tremendous visitation in Hamlet, beyond which no human imagination can ever hope to pass.*

CHAPTER XI.

Observations on *King John*; on *All's Well that Ends Well*; on *King Henry the Fifth*; on *Much Ado about Nothing*; on *As You Like It*; on *Merry Wives of Windsor*; on *Troilus and Cressida*; on *Henry the Eighth*; on *Timon of Athens*; on *Measure for Measure*; on *King Lear*; on *Cymbeline*; on *Macbeth*—Dissertation on the Popular Belief in Witchcraft during the Age of Shakspeare, and on his Management of this Superstition in the Tragedy of *Macbeth*.

WE are well aware, that, to many of our readers, the chronological discussion incident to a new arrangement, will be lamented as tedious and uninteresting; the more so, as nothing absolutely certain can be expected as the result. That this part of our subject, therefore, may be as compressed as possible, we shall, in future, be very brief in offering a determination between the decisions of the two previous chronologers, reserving a somewhat larger space for the few instances in which it may be thought necessary to deviate from both.

Of the plays enumerated by Meres, in September, 1598, only two remain to be noticed in this portion of our work, namely, *King John* and *Love's Labour's Wonne*:—

16. *KING JOHN*: 1598. Mr. Chalmers having detected some allusions in this play to the events of 1597, in addition to those which Mr. Malone had accurately referred to the preceding year, it becomes necessary, with the former of these gentlemen, to assign its production to the spring of 1598.

If *King John*, as a whole, be not entitled to class among the very first rate compositions of our author, it can yet exhibit some scenes of superlative beauty and effect, and two characters supported with unfailing energy and consistency.

The bastard Faulconbridge, though not perhaps a very amiable personage, being somewhat too interested and wordly-minded in his conduct to excite much of our esteem, has, notwithstanding, so large a portion of the very spirit of Plantagenet in him, so much heroism, gaiety, and fire in his constitution, and, in spite of his vowed accommodation to the times, such an open and undaunted turn of mind, that we cannot refuse him our admiration, nor, on account of his fidelity to John, however ill-deserved, our occasional sympathy and attachment. The alacrity and intrepidity of his daring spirit are nobly supported to the very last, where we find him exerting every nerve to rouse and animate the conscience-stricken soul of the tyrant.

In the person of Lady Constance, Maternal Grief, the most interesting passion of the play, is developed in all its strength; the picture penetrates to the inmost heart, and seared must those feelings be, which can withstand so powerful an appeal; for all the emotions of the fondest affection, and the wildest despair, all the rapid transitions of anguish, and approximating phrenzy, are wrought up into the scene with a truth of conception which rivals that of nature herself.

* It has been asserted by Gildon, but upon what foundation does not appear, that Shakspeare wrote the scene of the Ghost in Hamlet, in the church-yard bordering on his house at Stratford.

The innocent and beauteous Arthur, rendered doubly attractive by the sweetness of his disposition and the severity of his fate, is thus described by his doating mother:—

“ But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy !
Nature and fortune join'd to make thee great ;
Of Nature's gifts thou may'st with lilies boast,
And with the half-blown rose ” Act iii. sc. 1.

When he is captured, therefore, and imprisoned by John, and consequently, sealed for destruction, who but Shakspeare could have done justice to the agonising sorrows of the parents? Her invocation to death, and her address to Pandulph, paint maternal despair with a force which no imagination can augment, and of which the tenderness and pathos have never been exceeded:—

“ Death, death :—O amiable lovely death !—
Come, grin on me ; and I will think thou smil'st—
———— Misery's love,
O, come to me ! ” &c. Act iii. sc. 4.

Independent of the scenes which unfold the striking characters of Constance and Faulconbridge, there are two others in this play which may vie with any thing that Shakspeare has produced; namely, the scene between John and Hubert, and that between Hubert and Arthur. The former, where the usurper obscurely intimates to Hubert his bloody wishes, is conducted in so masterly a manner, that we behold the dark and turbulent soul of John lying naked before us in all its deformity, and shrinking with fear even from the enunciation of its own vile purpose; “it is one of the scenes,” as Mr. Steevens has well observed, “to which may be promised a lasting commendation. Art could add little to its perfection; and time itself can take nothing from its beauties.”

The scene with Hubert and the executioners, where the hapless Arthur supplicates for mercy, almost lacerates the heart itself; and is only rendered supportable by the tender and alleviating impression which the sweet innocence and artless eloquence of the poor child fix with indelible influence on the mind. Well may it be said, in the language of our poet, that he who can behold this scene without the gushing tribute of a tear,

“ Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ;
Let no such man be trusted.”

As for the character of John, which, from its meanness and imbecility, seems not well calculated for dramatic representation, Shakspeare has contrived, towards the close of the drama, to excite in his behalf some degree of interest and commiseration; especially in the dying scene, where the fallen monarch, in answer to the enquiry of his son as to the state of his feelings, mournfully exclaims,—

Poison'd,—ill fare ;—dead, forsook, cast off.”

17. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL: 1598. There does not appear any sufficient reason for altering the date assigned to this play by Mr. Malone, whom we have, therefore, followed in preference to Mr. Chalmers, who has fixed on the succeeding year; a decision to which we have been particularly induced, independent of other circumstances, by the apparent notice of this drama by Meres, under the title of *Love's Labour's Wonne*, an appellation which very accurately applies to this, but to no other of our author's productions with any similar degree of pertinency. We have reason, therefore, to conclude, as nothing has hitherto been brought forward to invalidate the assumption, that Meres's title was the original designation of this comedy, and was intended by the poet as a counter-title to *Love's Labour's Lost*. What induced him to dismiss the first, and to adopt the present proverbial appellation, cannot positively be ascertained; but the probability is, as Mr. Malone has remarked, that the alteration was suggested in consequence of the adage itself being found in the body of the play.

The noblest character in this comedy, which, though founded on a story somewhat too improbable, abounds both in interest and entertainment, is the good old Countess of Rousillon. Shakspeare seems to have drawn this portrait con amore, and we figure to ourselves for this amiable woman, a countenance beaming with dignity, sweetness, and sensibility, emanations from a heart which had ever responded to the impulses of love and charity. In short, her maternal affection for the gentle Helen, her piety, sound sense, and candour, call for our warmest reverence and esteem, which accompany her to the close of the representation, and follow her departure with regret. *

Helen, the romantic, the love-dejected Helen, must excite in every feeling bosom a high degree of sympathy; patient suffering in the female sex, especially when resulting from ill-requited attachment, and united with modesty and beauty, cannot but be an object of interest and commiseration, and in the instance before us, these are admirably blended in

————— “ a maid too virtuous
For the contempt of empire,

but who, unfortunately, has to struggle against the prejudices of birth, rank, and unfeeling pride, in the very man who is the object of her idolatry, and who, even after the most sacred of bonds should have cemented their destiny, flies with scorn from her embraces.

If in the infancy of her passion the error of indiscretion be attributable to Helen, how is it atoned for by the most engaging humility, by the most bewitching tenderness of heart: “Be not offended,” she tells her noble patroness,

“ Be not offended ; for it hurts not him,
That he is lov'd of me : I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit ;
Nor would I have him, till I do deserve him ;
Yet never know how that desert should be—
————— thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more.”

Act i. sc. 3.

But when the wife of Bertram, with a resignation and self-devotedness worthy of the highest praise, she deserts the house of her mother-in-law, knowing that whilst she is sheltered there her husband will not return, how does she, becoming thus an unprotected wanderer, a pilgrim bare-foot plodding the cold ground for him who has contemned her, rise to the tone of exalted truth and heroism !

————— “ Poor lord ! is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war ? ” &c.

Act iii. sc. 2.

It was necessary, in order to place the character of Helen in its most interesting point of view, that Bertram should be represented as arrogant, profligate, and unfeeling; a coxcomb who to family-consequence hesitates not to sacrifice all that is manly, just, and honourable. The picture is but too true to nature, and, since the poet found such a delineation essential to the construction of his story, he has very properly taken care, though Bertram, out of tenderness to the Countess and Helena, meets not the punishment he merits, that nothing in mitigation of his folly should be produced.

To the comic portion of this drama too much praise can scarcely be given; it is singularly rich in all that characterises the wit, the drollery, and the humour of Shakspeare. The Clown is the rival of Touchstone in *As You Like It*; and

* “Of all the characters of Shakspeare,” remarks Mr. Felton, “none more resemble his best female advocate (Mrs. Montagu) than the Countess of Rousillon.”—*Imperfect Hints*, part i. p. 65.

Parolles, in the power of exciting laughter and ludicrous enjoyment, is only secondary to Falstaff.

18. **KING HENRY THE FIFTH: 1599.** The chorus at the commencement of the fifth act, and the silence of Meres, too plainly point out the era of the composition of this play, to admit of any alteration depending on the bare supposition of subsequent interpolation, or on allusions too vague and general to afford any specific application.

No character has been portrayed more at length by our poet than that of Henry the Fifth, for we trace him acting a prominent part through three plays. In Henry the Fourth, until the battle of Shrewsbury, we behold him in all the effervescence of his madcap revelry; occasionally, it is true, affording us glimpses of the native mightiness of his mind, but first bursting upon us with heroic splendour on that celebrated field. In every situation, however, he is evidently the darling offspring of his bard, whether we attend him to the frolic orgies in Eastcheap, to his combat with the never-daunted Percy, or, as in the play before us, to the immortal plains of Agincourt.

The fire and animation which inform the soul of Henry when he rushes to arms in defence of his father's throne, are supported with unwearied vigour, with a blaze which never falters, throughout the whole of his martial achievements in France. Nor has Shakspeare been content with representing him merely in the light of a noble and chivalrous hero, he has endowed him with every regal virtue; he is magnanimous, eloquent, pious, and sincere; versed in all the arts of government, policy, and war; a lover of his country and of his people, and a strenuous protector of their liberties and rights.

Of the various instances which our author has brought forward for the exemplification of these virtues and acquirements, it may be necessary to notice two or three. Thus the detection of the treason of Cambridge, Gray, and Scroop, who had conspired to assassinate Henry previous to his embarkation, exhibits a rich display of the mental greatness and emphatic oratory of this warlike monarch. After reprobating the treachery of Cambridge and Gray, he suddenly turns upon Scroop, who had been his bosom-friend, with the following pathetic and soul-harrowing appeal: —

————— “ But
What shall I say to thee, lord Scroop?—
Thou, that did'st bear the key of all my counsels,” &c. Act ii. sc. 2.

Nor can we forbear distinguishing the dismissal of these traitors, as a striking example of magnanimity, and of justice tempered with dignified compassion:—

“ God quit you in his mercy!—
Touching our person, seek we no revenge;
But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,” &c. Act ii. sc. 2.

In the fourth act, what a masterly picture of the cares and solitudes of royalty is drawn by Henry himself, in his noble soliloquy on the morning of the battle, especially towards the close, where he contrasts the gorgeous but painful ceremonies of a crown with the profitable labour and the balmy rest of the peasant, who

————— “ from the rise to set,
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
Sleeps in Elysium!”

But the prayer which immediately follows is unrivalled for its power of impression, presenting us with the most lively idea of the amiability, piety, and devotional fervour of the monarch: —

“ O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts!
Not to-day, O Lord,
O not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!” &c. Act iv. sc. 1.

Of the picturesque force of an epithet, there is not in the records of poetry a more remarkable instance than what is here produced by the adoption of the term *withered*, through which the scene starts into existence with a boldness of relief that vies with the noblest creations of the pencil.

The address to Westmoreland, on his wishing for more men from England, is a fine specimen of military eloquence, possessing that high tone of enthusiasm and exhilaration, so well calculated to inflame the daring spirit of the soldier. It is in perfect keeping with the historical character of Henry, nor can we agree with Dr. Johnson in thinking that its reduction "to about half the number of lines," would have added, either to its force or weight of sentiment; so far, indeed, are we from coalescing with this decision, that we feel convinced not a clause could be withdrawn without material injury to the animation and effect of the whole.

Instances of the same impressive and energising powers of elocution, will be found in the King's exhortation to his soldiers before the gates of Harfleur (act iii. sc. 1); in his description of the horrors attendant on a city taken by storm (act iii. sc. 3); and in his replies to the Herald Montjoy; all of which spring naturally from, and are respectively adapted to, the circumstances of the scene.

Nor, amid all the dangers and unparalleled achievements of the Fifth Henry, do we altogether lose sight of the frank and easy gaiety which distinguished the Prince of Wales. His winning condescension in sympathising with the cares and pleasures of his soldiers, display the same kindness and affability of temper, the same love of raillery and humour, reminiscences, as it were, of his youthful days, and which, in his intercourse with Williams and Fluellen, produce the most pleasing and grateful relief.

These touches of a frolic pencil are managed with such art and address, that they derogate nothing from the dignity of the monarch and the conqueror; what may be termed the truly comic portion of the play, being carried on apart from any immediate connection with the person of the sovereign.

As the events of warfare and the victories of Henry form the sole subjects of the serious parts of this piece, it was necessary for the sake of variety and dramatic effect, and in order to satisfy the audience of this age, that comic characters and incidents should be interspersed; and, though we are disappointed in not seeing Falstaff, according to the poet's promise, again on the scene, we once more behold his associates, Bardolph, Pistol, and Hostess Quickly, pursuing their pleasant career with unfailing eccentricity and humour. The description of the death of Falstaff by the last of this fantastic trio, is executed with peculiar felicity, for while it excites a smile verging on risibility, it calls forth, at the same time, a sigh of pity and regret.

Of the general conduct of this play, it may be remarked, that the interest turns altogether upon the circumstances which accompany a single battle; consequently the poet has put forth all his strength in colouring and contrasting the situation of the two armies; and so admirably has he succeeded in this attempt, by opposing the full assurance of victory, on the part of the French, their boastful clamour, and impatient levity, to the conscious danger, calm valour, and self-devotedness of the English, that we wait the issue of the combat with an almost breathless anxiety.

And, in order that the heroism of Henry might not want any decoration which poetry could afford, the epic and lyric departments have been laid under contribution, for the purpose of supplying what the very confined limits of the stage, then in the infancy of its mechanism, had no means of unfolding. A preliminary chorus, therefore, is attached to each act, impressing vividly on the imagination what could not be addressed to the senses, and adding to a subject, in itself more epic than dramatic, all the requisite grandeur and sublimity of description.

19. **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING: 1599.** The allusion, in the opening scene of this comedy, to a circumstance attending the campaign of the Earl of Essex in Ireland, during the summer of 1599, which was first noticed by Mr. Chalmers, and which seems corroborated by the testimony of Camden and Moryson, has induced

us to adopt the chronology dependent on this apparent reference, the only note of time, indeed, which has hitherto been discovered in the play.

This very popular production, which appears to have originally had the title of *Benedick and Beatrice*, and is, in its leading incidents, to be traced to one of the tales of *Bandello*, * possesses, both with respect to its fable and characters, a vivacity, richness, and variety, together with a happiness of combination, which delight as much as they astonish.

The two plots are managed with uncommon skill; the first, involving the temporary disgrace and the recognition of Hero, includes a vast range of emotions, and abounds both in pathos and humour. The accusation of the innocent Hero by the man whom she loved, and at the very moment too, when she was about to be united to him for life, excites a most powerful impression; but is surpassed by the scene which restores her to happiness, where Claudio, supposing himself about to be united, in obedience to the will of Leonato, to a relation of his former beloved, and, as he concludes, deceased mistress, on unveiling the bride, beholds the features of her whom he had injured, and whom he had lamented as no more.

It is no small proof of the ingenuity of our poet, that through the means by which the iniquity practised against Hero is developed, we are furnished with a fund of the most ludicrous entertainment; the charge of Dogberry to the Watch, and the arrest and examination of Conrade and Borachio, throwing all the muscles of risibility into action.

Nor is the second plot in any respect inferior to the first; indeed, there is reason to believe, that, to the masterly delineations of Benedick and Beatrice, "the most sprightly characters that Shakspeare ever drew," and to their mutual entrapment in the meshes of love, a great part of the popularity which has ever accompanied this comedy, is in justice to be ascribed. Fault, however, has been found with the mode by which the reciprocal affection of these sworn foes to love has been secured: "the second contrivance," observes Mr. Steevens, "is less ingenious than the first:—or, to speak more plainly, the same incident is become stale by repetition. I wish some other method had been found to entrap Beatrice, than that very one which before had been successfully practised on Benedick;" an objection which has been censured with some severity by Schlegel, who justly remarks, that the drollery of this twice-used artifice "lies in the very symmetry of the deception."† It may be added, that the conversation of the gentleman and the wit, in Shakspeare's days, may be pretty well ascertained from the part of Benedick in this play, and from that of Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*; both presenting us, after some allowance for a license of allusion too broad for the decorum of the present day, with a favourable picture of the accomplishments of polished society in the reign of Elizabeth.

20. *As You Like It*: 1600. Though this play, with the exception of the disguise and self-discovery of Rosalind, may be said to be destitute of plot, it is yet one of the most delightful of the dramas of Shakspeare. There is something inexpressibly wild and interesting both in the characters and in the scenery; the former disclosing the moral discipline and the sweets of adversity, the purest emotions of love and friendship, of gratitude and fidelity, the melancholy of genius, and the exhilaration of innocent mirth, as opposed to the desolating effects of malice, envy, and ambition; and the latter unfolding, with the richest glow of fancy, landscapes to which, as objects of imitation, the united talents of Ruysdale, Claude and Salvator Rosa, could alone do justice.

From the forest of Arden, from that wild wood of oaks,

"whose boughs were moss'd with age,
And light tops bald with dry antiquity,"

* It is most probable that Shakspeare derived his materials from a version of Belleforest, who copied *Bandello*. The story forms the 22d tale of the first part of *Bandello*, and the 18th history of the 3d volume of Belleforest.

† Schlegel on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 166.

from the bosom of sequestered glens and pathless solitudes, has the poet called forth lessons of the most touching and consolatory wisdom. Airs from paradise seem to fan with refreshing gales, with a soothing consonance of sound, the interminable depth of foliage, and to breathe into the hearts of those who have sought its shelter from the world, an oblivion of their sorrows and their cares. The banished Duke, the much-injured Orlando, and the melancholy Jaques, lose in meditation on the scenes which surround them, or in sportive freedom, or in grateful occupation, all corrosive sense of past affliction. Love seems the only passion which has penetrated this romantic seclusion, and the sigh of philosophic pity, or of wounded sensibility (the legacy of a deserted world), the only relique of the storm which is passed and gone.

Nothing, in fact, can blend more harmoniously with the romantic glades and magic windings of Arden, than the society which Shakspeare has placed beneath its shades. The effect of such scenery, on the lover of nature, is to take full possession of the soul, to absorb its very faculties, and, through the charmed imagination, to convert the workings of the mind into the sweetest sensations of the heart, into the joy of grief, into a thankful endurance of adversity, into the interchange of the tenderest affections; and find we not here, in the person of the Duke, the noblest philosophy of resignation; in Jaques, the humorous sadness of an amiable misanthropy; in Orlando, the mild dejection of self-accusing humility; in Rosalind and Celia, the purity of sisterly affection, whilst love in all its innocence and gaiety binds in delicious fetters, not only the younger exiles, but the pastoral natives of the forest. A day thus spent, in all the careless freedom of unsophisticated nature, seems worth an eternity of common-place existence!

The nice discrimination of Shakspeare and his profound knowlege of human nature are no where more apparent than in sketching the character of Jaques, whose social and confiding affections, originally warm and enthusiastic, and which had led him into all the excesses and credulities of thoughtless attachment, being blighted by the desertion of those on whom he had fondly relied, have suddenly subsided into a delicately blended compound of melancholy, misanthropy, and morbid sensibility, mingled with a large portion of benevolent though sarcastic humour. The selfishness and ingratitude of mankind are, consequently, the theme of all his meditations, and even tinge his recreations with the same pensive hue of moral invective. We accordingly first recognise him in a situation admirably adapted to the nurture of his peculiar feelings, laid at length

“ Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along the wood,”

and assimilating the fate of an unfortunate stag, who had been wounded by the hunters, and who

“ Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears,”

to the too common lot of humanity:—

“ Duke. But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralize this spectacle?” &c.

Act ii. sc. 1.

As might be imagined, music, the food of melancholy as well as of love, is the chief consolation of Jacques; he tells Amiens, who, on finishing a song, had objected to his request of singing again, that it would make him melancholy. “I thank it. More, I pr’ythee more. I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs: More, I pr’ythee, more;” (act ii. sc. 5) and we can well conceive with what exquisite pleasure he listened to the subsequent song of the same nobleman:

“ Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man’s ingratitude;” &c.

Act ii. sc. 7.

From this interesting and finely shaded character, the result of a false estimate of what is to be expected from human nature and society, much valuable instruction may be derived; but as a similar delineation will soon occur in the person of Timon, we shall defer what may be required upon this subject to a subsequent page.

21. **MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR: 1601.** It does not appear to us that Mr. Chalmers has succeeded in his endeavours to set aside the general tradition relative to this comedy, as recorded by Mr. Rowe, who says, that Queen Elizabeth “was so well pleased with the admirable character of Falstaff in *The Two Parts of Henry the Fourth*, that she commanded Shakspeare to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love.” Rowe adopted this from Dennis, who mentions it as the tradition of his time; and has also related, that being “eager to see it acted,” she ordered it “to be finished in fourteen days,” * and was highly gratified by the representation.

A tradition of the seventeenth century thus general in its diffusion, and particular in its circumstances, cannot, and ought not, to be shaken by the mere observations that “she (the Queen) was certainly too feeble in 1601 to think of such toys,” and that at this time “she was in no proper mood for such fooleries;” more especially when we recollect, that at this very period she was guilty of fooleries greatly more extravagant and out of character, than that of commanding a play to be written. At a “mask at Blackfriars, on the marriage of Lord Herbert and Mrs. Russel,” relates Lord Orford, on the authority of the Bacon Papers, “eight lady maskers chose eight more to dance the measures. Mrs. Fritton, who led them, went to the Queen, and wooed her to dance. Her Majesty asked, what she was? ‘Affection,’ she said. ‘Affection!’ said the Queen;—‘Affection is false.’—Yet her majesty rose and danced.—She was then SIXTY-EIGHT!” † If, at the age of sixty-eight, she was not too feeble to dance, nor too wise to fancy herself in love, we may easily conceive, that she had both strength and inclination to attend and to enjoy a play!

Another objection of the same critic to the probability of this tradition, turns upon the extraordinary assumption, that it was not within the omnipotence of Elizabeth “to bring Falstaff to real life, after being positively as dead as nail in door;” as if Falstaff had ever possessed a real existence, and the Queen had been expected to have occasioned his bodily resurrection from the dead. In accordance with this supposed impossibility, impossible only in this strange point of view, we are further told, that “whatever a capricious Queen might have wished to have seen, the audience would not have borne to see the dead knight on the living stage;” thus again confounding the dramatic death of an imaginary being, with the physical dissolution incident to material nature! Surely Shakspeare had an unlimited control over the creatures of his own imagination, and had he reproduced the fat knight in half-a-dozen plays, after the death which he had already assigned him in *Henry the Fifth*, who, provided he had supported the merit and consistency of the character, would have charged him with a violation of probability? When Addison killed Sir Roger de Coverley, in order, as tradition says, to prevent any one interfering with the unity of his sketch, he could only be certain of the non-resumption of his imaginary existence in the very work which had detailed his decease; for if Addison himself, or any of his contemporaries, had reproduced Sir Roger, in a subsequent periodical paper, with the same degree of skill which had accompanied the first delineation, would it have been objected as a sufficient condemnation of such a performance, that the knight had been previously dispatched?

We see no reason, therefore, for distrusting the generally received tradition, and have, accordingly, placed the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, with Mr. Malone, after the three plays devoted to *Henry the Fourth*, and *Fifth*.

* Epistle Dedicatory to *The Gomical Gallant*, 1702.

† Royal and Noble Authors, apud Park, vol. i. p. 82.

In this very entertaining drama, which unfolds a vast display of incident, and a remarkable number of well-supported characters, we are presented with an almost unrivalled instance of pure domestic comedy, and which furnishes a rich draught of English minds and manners, in the middle ranks of society, during one of the most interesting periods of our annals.

Shakspeare has here achieved, perhaps, the most difficult task which can fall to the lot of any writer; that of resuscitating a favourite and highly-wrought child of the imagination, and, with a success equal to that which attended the original production, re-involving him in a series of fresh adventures. Falstaff has not lost, in this comedy, any portion of his former power of pleasing; he returns to us in the fulness of his strength, and we immediately enter, with unabated avidity and relish, into a further development of his inexhaustible stores of humour, wit, and drollery.

The self-delusion of Sir John, who conceives himself to be an object of love, and the incongruities, absurdities, and intrigues, into which this monstrous piece of vanity plunges him, form, together with the secondary plot of Fenton and Anne Page, the richest tissue of incident and stratagem that ever graced a stage. The mode, also, in which the two intrigues are interwoven, the happy termination of the second, arising out of the contrivance which brings about the issue of the first, has a just claim to praise both for its invention and execution.

To the comic characters which had formerly been associated with the exploits of the Knight, and which, as accessories or retainers, accompany him in this play, some very laughable and grotesque additions are to be found in the persons of Slender, Sir Hugh Evans, and Dr. Caius, who are deeply implicated in the fable, and who, by the most ludicrous exhibitions of rustic simplicity, provincial accent, and broken English, contribute in a high degree to the variety and hilarity of the scene.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA: 1601. That this play was written and acted before the decease of Queen Elizabeth, is evident from the manner in which it is entered on the Stationers' Books, being registered on February 7, 1602-3, "*as acted by my Lord Chamberlen's men,*" who, in the year of the accession of King James, obtained a license for their theatre, and were denominated "*His Majesty's servants.*"

It also appears, from some entries in Mr. Henslowes's Manuscript, that a drama on this subject, at first called "*Troyelles and Cresseda,*" but, before its production, altered in its title to "*The Tragedy of Agamemnon,*" was in existence anterior to Shakspeare's play, and was licensed by the Master of the Revels, on the 3rd of June, 1599.

From these premises we have a right to infer that our poet's *Troilus and Cressida* was written between June, 1599, and February, 1603, and, accordingly, our two chronologers have thus placed it; Mr. Malone in 1602, and Mr. Chalmers in 1600. But it appears to us, for reasons which we shall immediately assign, that its more probable era is that of 1601.

It has been correctly observed by the Commentators, that an incident in our author's *Troilus and Cressida*, is ridiculed in an anonymous comedy, entitled *Histriomastix*, "*which, though not printed till 1610, must have been written before the death of Queen Elizabeth, who, in the last act of the piece, is shadowed under the character of Astræa, and is spoken of as then living.*"

We cannot avoid thinking it somewhat extraordinary that when Mr. Malone recorded this circumstance, it did not occur to him, that, by placing the composition of Shakspeare's play in 1602, he allowed scarcely any time to the author of *Histriomastix* for the composition of his work. In order that a parody or burlesque may be successful, it is necessary that the production ridiculed should have acquired a certain degree of celebrity, and however well received by the court, before which it was at first chiefly performed, this drama of our author may have been, some time must have elapsed ere it could have acquired a sufficient degree of noto-

riety for the purpose of successful satire. But if Shakspeare wrote his *Troilus and Cressida* in 1602, and had even completed it by the middle of the year, scarcely nine months could intervene between this completion and the death of the Queen in March, 1603; and during this short interval, the play of our poet must have been acted, and celebrated so repeatedly and so highly, as to have excited the pen of envy and burlesque, and the comedy of *Histriomastix* must have been written and performed; a space certainly much too inadequate for these effects and results, more particularly if we are allowed to conclude, what most probably was the case, that the anonymous comedy was finished some months anterior to the decease of Elizabeth.

On the other hand, it would seem that Mr. Chalmers, by approximating the date of Shakspeare's play too closely to that of the elder drama, may be taxed with a similar error. That our poet was in the habit of adopting subjects which had been previously rendered popular on the stage, has been acknowledged by all his commentators, and that his attention was first attracted to the fable under consideration, by the play exhibited on Mr. Henslowe's theatre, there can be little doubt. But this production, we find, was not licensed by the Master of the Revels until June, 1599, and as popularity attached to the performance would be necessary to stimulate Shakspeare to remodel the subject, we can scarcely conceive him, both on this account, and a motive of delicacy to a rival theatre, to have commenced the composition of his *Troilus and Cressida* before the beginning of 1601.

It was at this period then, that our bard, excited by the success of the prior attempt in 1599, turned his attention to the subject; and, referring to his Chaucer, to Caxton's Translation of the "*Recuyles or Destruction of Troy*, from Raoul le Fevre," and to the first seven books of Chapman's Homer, for the materials of his story, presented us with the most singular, and, in some respects, the most striking, of his productions.

This play is, indeed, a most perfect unique both in its construction and effect, appearing to be a continued sarcasm on the "*Tale of Troy divine*," an ironical copy, as it were, of the great Homeric picture. Whether this was in the contemplation of Shakspeare, or whether it might not, in a great measure, flow from the nature of the Gothic narratives to which he had recourse, may admit of some doubt. As Homer, however, was in part before him, in the excellent version of Chapman, it appears to us, that it certainly was his design to expose the follies and absurdities of the Trojan war; the despicable nature of its origin, and the furious discords which protracted its issue. In doing this he has stripped the Homeric characters of all their epic pomp; he has laid them naked to the very heart, but he has, at the same time, individualised them, with a pencil so keen, powerful, and discriminating, that we become more intimately acquainted with them, as mere men, from the perusal of this play, than from all the splendid descriptions of the Greek poet.

This unparalleled strength and distinctness of characterisation, as unfolded in the play before us, has been admirably painted by Mr. Godwin.

"The whole catalogue," he observes, "of the *dramatis personæ* in the play of *Troilus and Cressida*, so far as they depend upon a rich and original vein of humour in the author, are drawn with a felicity which never was surpassed. The genius of Homer has been a topic of admiration to almost every generation of men since the period in which he wrote. But his characters will not bear the slightest comparison with the delineation of the same characters as they stand in Shakspeare. This is a species of honour which ought by no means to be forgotten when we are making the eulogium of our immortal bard, a sort of illustration of his greatness which cannot fail to place it in a very conspicuous light. The dispositions of men perhaps had not been sufficiently unfolded in the very early period of intellectual refinement when Homer wrote; the rays of humour had not been dissected by the glass, or rendered perdurable by the pencil, of the poet. Homer's characters are drawn with a laudable portion of variety and consistency; but his Achilles, his Ajax, and his Nestor are, each of them, rather a species than a individual, and can boast more of the propriety of abstraction, than of the vivacity of a moving scene of absolute life. The Achilles, the Ajax, and the various Grecian heroes of Shakspeare, on the other hand, are absolute men,

deficient in nothing which can tend to individualise them, and already touched with the Promethean fire that might infuse a soul into what, without it, were lifeless form. From the rest perhaps the character of Thersites deserves to be selected (how cold and schoolboy a sketch in Homer), as exhibiting an appropriate vein of sarcastic humour amidst his cowardice, and profoundness and truth in his mode of laying open the foibles of those about him, impossible to be excelled.

“Shakspeare possessed, no man in higher perfection, the true dignity and loftiness of the poetical afflatus, which he has displayed in many of the finest passages of his works with miraculous success. But he knew that no man ever was, or ever can be, always dignified. He knew that those subtler traits of character which identify a man, are familiar and relaxed, pervaded with passion, and not played off with an external eye to decorum. In this respect the peculiarities of Shakspeare’s genius are no where more forcibly illustrated than in the play we are here considering. The champions of Greece and Troy, from the hour in which their names were first recorded, had always worn a certain formality of attire, and marched with a slow and measured step. No poet, till this time, had ever ventured to force them out of the manner which their epic creator had given them. Shakspeare first supplied their limbs, took from them the classic stiffness of their gait, and enriched them with an entire set of those attributes, which might render them completely beings of the same species with ourselves.” *

The great defect of this play, which, in other respects, is highly entertaining and instructive, and abounding in didactic morality, expressed with the utmost beauty, vigour, and boldness of diction, is a want of attachment to its characters. If we set aside Hector, who seems to have been the favourite hero with Shakspeare, and his Gothic authorities, there is not a person in the drama for whom we feel any sympathy or interest; the Grecian chiefs, though varied and coloured in the highest style of relief, are any thing but amiable, and of the persons involved in the love-intrigue, two are proverbially infamous, whilst the forsaken Troilus appears in too tame and inefficient a light to call forth any share of admiration or regret.

23. KING HENRY THE EIGHTH: 1602. Few of the plays of Shakspeare have occasioned more difference of opinion, with regard to the era of their production, than this historical drama. Mr. Malone contends that it was written in 1601 or 1602, and that, after having lain by for some years unacted, on account of the costliness of its exhibition, it was revived in 1613, under the title of “All is True,” with new decorations, and a new prologue and epilogue; and that this revival took place on the very day, being St. Peter’s, on which the Globe Theatre was burnt down, occasioned, it is said, by the discharge of some small pieces, called chambers, on King Henry’s arrival at Cardinal Wolsey’s gate at Whitehall, one of which, being injudiciously managed, set fire to the thatched roof of the theatre. He also joins with Dr. Johnson and Dr. Farmer in conceiving, that the prologue, and even some part of the dialogue, were, on this occasion, written by Ben Jonson, to whom also he ascribes the conduct and superintendence of the representation.

Mr. Chalmers, on the contrary, believes that this piece was neither represented nor written before 1613, and that its first appearance on the stage was the night of the conflagration above-mentioned. He reprobates the folly of supposing “that Ben Jonson, “who was in perpetual hostility with Shakspeare, made adycyons to Henry VIII. or even wrote the prologue for our poet.” †

And, lastly, Mr. Gifford declares it to be his conviction that the tragedy of our poet was produced in 1601; but that, on the supposed revival of it in 1613, neither the prologue was written by Jonson, nor the play by Shakspeare, the piece then performed being a new play, called “All is Truth,” constructed, indeed, on the history of Henry the Eighth, and, like that, full of shows, but not the composition of our author. He has here likewise, as every where else, very successfully combated the prejudice and credulity of the commentators, in their perpetual assumption of the enmity of Jonson to Shakspeare. ‡

* Life of Chaucer, vol. i. p. 509—512. 8vo edit.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 446, et seq

‡ The Works of Ben Jonson, by W. Gifford, Esq. 8vo, 1816. vol. i. p. cclxxii.

For the arguments by which these conflicting opinions are maintained, we must refer to the respective writings of the combatants, our limits only permitting us to state and briefly to support one or two circumstances which, in our view of them, seem irresistibly to prove, that, in the first place, the play performed on the 29th of June, 1613, was Shakspeare's tragedy of Henry the Eighth; and, secondly, that it was his tragedy revived, with a new name, and with a new prologue, both emanating from himself.

Now, if the prologue which has always accompanied our author's drama from its first publication in 1623, manifestly and repeatedly allude to the title of the play which was represented on the 29th of June, 1613, and which we know to have been founded on the history of King Henry the Eighth, can there be a stronger proof of their identity, or a more satisfactory reply to the query of Mr. Gifford, who asks, who would have recognised Henry the Eighth under the name of All is Truth? (or rather, as he should have said, All is True?) than what these intimations afford? That they have, indeed, been noticed both by Mr. Tyrwhitt and Mr. Malone, as alluding to the title in question, is true; but that they appear to us so important and decisive, as to merit being brought forward more distinctly, especially as they have escaped Mr. Gifford's attention. We shall therefore transcribe them, being convinced that not accident but design dictated their insertion:—

“ Such, as give
Their money out of hope they may believe,
May here find *truth* too.

“ Gentle readers, know,
To rank *our chosen truth* with such a show
As fool and fight is,” &c.—

“ To make that only *true* we now intend.”

That the play represented at the Globe in 1613, was merely a revived play, wants no other proof than the following:—In a MS. letter of Tho. Lorking to Sir Tho. Puckering, dated London, this last of June, 1613, Lorkin tells his friend, that “No longer since than yesterday, while Bourbage his companie were acting at the Globe the play of Hen. VIII. and there shooting of certayne chambers in way of triumph, the fire catched,” etc.

We would now enquire if it were possible any rational person writing from London to his friend in the country, concerning a new play which had been performed, for the first time, but the day before the date of his letter, could make use of language such as this? Must he not necessarily have said, “a play, or a new play, called Hen. VIII.?” And does not the phraseology which he has adopted, namely, “the play of Hen. VIII.,” evidently imply that the piece had been long known?”

So decidedly, in our opinion, do these two circumstances prove, that it was Shakspeare's Henry the Eighth revived, which was performed at the Globe Theatre on St. Peter's day, 1613, that we no longer hesitate a moment in admitting, with the principal commentators, that this tragedy was originally written but a short time anterior to the death of Elizabeth, to whom some elegant and appropriate praise is offered; and that the compliment to James the First, rather forcibly introduced into the closing scene, was composed by our poet expressly for the revival of 1613; admissions which not only seem warranted by the internal evidence of the play, but almost necessarily flow from the establishment of the two inferences for which we have contended.

There is much reason to conclude that, in the long interval between the death of Queen Elizabeth and the year 1613, our author's Henry the Eighth had never been performed; and it is further probable that, on this account, and in consequence of its receiving a new name, a new prologue and epilogue, and new decorations of unprecedented splendour, the players might, as Mr. Malone has

suggested, have called it in the bills of that time a new play; an epithet which we find Sir Henry Wotton has adopted, when describing the accident at the Globe Theatre, and which, if writing in haste, or with less attention to the history of the stage than occurs in the letter of Mr. Lorkin, he might, from similar causes, naturally be expected to repeat.

In adjusting the chronology of this play, Mr. Malone has remarked, that Shakspeare, having produced so many plays in the preceding years, "it is not likely that King Henry the Eighth was written before 1601. It might, perhaps, with, equal propriety, be ascribed to 1602." We have fixed upon the latter date, for this obvious reason, that our enquiries, having led us to supply the preceding year with two plays, it has been thought more consonant to probability to assign it to the less occupied period of 1602. It appears to us, therefore, to have been composed about a twelvemonth previous to the death of the Queen, an event which occurred in March, 1603.

It need scarcely be added, that, from Mr. Gifford's complete refutation of the slander which has been so long indulged in against the character of Ben Jonson, we utterly disbelieve that this calumniated poet had any concern in the revival of Henry the Eighth.

The entire interest of this tragedy turns upon the characters of Queen Katharine and Cardinal Wolsey; the former being the finest picture of suffering and defenceless virtue, and the latter of disappointed ambition, that poet ever drew. The close of the second scene of the third act, which describes the fall of Wolsey, and the whole of the second scene of the fourth, which paints the dying sorrows and devout resignation of the persecuted Queen, have, as lessons of moral worth, a never-dying value; and of the latter, especially, it may without extravagance be said, that, in its power of exciting sympathy and compassion, it stands perfectly unrivalled by any dramatic effort of ancient or of modern time.

24. TIMON OF ATHENS: 1602. The existence of a manuscript play on this subject, to which our author has been evidently indebted, ought, in the absence of all other direct testimony, to be considered as our guiding star. Here, says Mr. Malone, our poet "found the faithful steward, the banquet scene, and the story of Timon's being possessed of great sums of gold which he had dug up in the woods: a circumstance which he could not have had from Lucian, there being then no translation of the dialogue that relates to this subject;" and, in another place he remarks, that this manuscript comedy "appears to have been written after Ben Jonson's *'Every Man out of his Humour,'* (1599) to which it contains a reference; but I have not discovered the precise time when it was composed. If it were ascertained, it might be some guide to us in fixing the date of our author's Timon of Athens, which I suppose to have been posterior to this anonymous play."

Now Mr. Steevens, who accurately inspected the manuscript play, tells us that it appears to have been written about the year 1600, whilst Mr. Chalmers has brought forward several intimations which, he thinks, prove that Shakspeare's drama was written during the reign of Elizabeth.

These statements, it is obvious, bring the subject into a small compass; for as the anonymous comedy must have been composed after 1599, referring, as it does, to a drama of that date, and as some incidents in Shakspeare's Timon are evidently founded upon it, whilst the death of Elizabeth took place in March, 1603, the play of our poet must necessarily, if Mr. Chalmers's intimations be relied upon, have been completed in the interim.

Indeed the only argument on the other side for fixing the date of this play in 1609, is built upon the supposition that Shakspeare commenced the study of Plutarch in 1605, and that having once availed himself of this historian for one of his plays, he was induced to proceed, until Julius Cæsar, Anthony and Cleopatra, Timon, and Coriolanus, had been written in succession. But, as it has been clearly ascertained by Mr. Chalmers, that Shakspeare was perfectly well

acquainted with Plutarch when he wrote his *Hamlet*, this supposition can no longer be tenable.

We have fixed on the year 1602 rather than 1601, for the era of the composition of our author's play, as it is equally susceptible of the illustration adduced by Mr. Chalmers, allows more scope for the production of the elder drama, and, at the same time, more opportunity to our poet to have become familiar with a comedy which, there is reason to think, from its pedantic style, was never popular, and certainly never was printed.

Timon of Athens is an admirable satire on the folly and ingratitude of mankind; the former exemplified in the thoughtless profusion of Timon, the latter in the conduct of his pretended friends; it is, as Dr. Johnson observes, "a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but not friendship."

But the mighty reach of Shakspeare's mind is in this play more particularly distinguishable in his delineation of the species and causes of misanthropy, and in the management of the delicate shades which diversify its effects on the heart of man. Timon and Apemantus are both misanthropes; but from very different causes, and with very different consequences, and yet they mutually illustrate each other.

The misanthropy of Timon arises from the perversion of what would otherwise have been the foundation of his happiness. He possesses great goodness and benevolence of heart, an ardent love of mankind, a spirit noble, enthusiastic, and confiding, but these are unfortunately directed into wrong channels by the influence of vanity, and the thirst of distinction. Rich in the amplest means of dispensing bounty, he receives, in return, such abundant praise, especially from the least deserving and the most designing, that he becomes intoxicated with adulation, craving it, at length, with the avidity of an appetite, and preferring the applause of the world to the silent approval of his own conscience.

The immediate consequence of this delusion is, that he seeks to bestow only where celebrity is to follow; he does not fly to succour poverty, misfortune, and disease, in their sequestered haunts, but he showers his gifts on poets, painters, warriors, and statesmen, on men of talents or of rank, whose flattery, either from genius or from station, will find an echo in the world. The next result of beneficence thus abused, is that Timon possesses numerous nominal but no *real* friends, and, when the hour of trial comes, he is, to a man, deserted in his utmost need. It is then, that having no estimate of friendship but what reposed on the characters who have left him bare to the storm, and concluding that the rest of mankind, compared with those whom he had selected, are rather worse than better, he gives loose to all the invective which deceived affection and wounded vanity can suggest; feeling, as it were, an abhorrence of, and an aversion to his species, in proportion to the keenness of his original sensibility, and the agony of his present disappointment.

The inherent goodness of Timon on the one hand, and his avarice of praise and flattery on the other, are vividly brought out through the medium of his servants, and of the Cynic Apemantus. The true criterion, indeed, of the worth of any individual, is best found in the estimation of his household, and we entertain a high sense of the value of Timon's character, from the attachment and fidelity of his dependants. They, in their humble intercourse with their master, have intimately felt the native benevolence of his disposition, and, to the disgrace of those who have revelled in his bounty, are the only sympathizers in his fate. They call to mind his generous virtues:

" Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart;
Undone by goodness!"

is the exclamation of his faithful steward; nor are the inferior domestics less sensible of his worth:—

" *I Serv.* So noble a master fallen!—and not
One friend to take his fortune by the arm!—

3 Serv. Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery,
That see I by our faces." Act iv. sc. 2.

When Flavius visits his master in his seclusion, and with the most disinterested views and the most heart-felt commiseration offers him his wealth and his attendance, Timon starts back with amazement bordering on distraction, afflicted and aghast at the recognition, when too late, of genuine friendship, and self-convicted of injustice towards his fellow-creatures:

" Had I a steward so true, so just, and now
So comfortable? It almost turns,
My dangerous nature wild." * &c.

Act iv. sc. 3.

If the constitutional goodness of Timon is to be inferred from the conduct of his domestics, the errors which overshadowed it are most distinctly laid open by the unsparing invective of Apemantus. The misanthropy of this character is not based, like Timon's, on the wreck of the noblest feelings of our nature, on the milk of human kindness turned to gall, but springs from the vilest of our passions, from envy, hatred, and malice. He is born a beggar, and his pride is to continue such, while his sole occupation, his pleasure and his choice, is to drag forth the vices, and calumniate the virtues of humanity. For this task he possesses, in the powers of his intellect, the utmost efficiency, and seems, indeed, to have been introduced by the poet for the express purpose of unfolding the conduct of Timon. The two characters, in fact, reciprocally anatomise each other, and with a depth and minuteness which leaves nothing undetected.

The lust of flattery and distinction which burns in the bosom of Timon, finds, even in the height of his prosperity, a sharp, and therefore a wholesome reproof in Apemantus, who tells the Athenian to his face, that "he that loves to be flattered, is worthy of the flatterer, at the same time exposing his limitless and ill-bestowed bounty in the strongest terms; but no good man would choose the hour of adversity and overwhelming distress for a still bitterer torrent of taunts and reproaches, at a period when nothing but additional misery could accrue from the experiment. Such, however, is the object of Apemantus, in his visit to the cave of Timon, and accordingly he experiences the reception which his motives so richly deserve:—

" *Tim.* Why dost thou seek me out?

Apem. To vex thee.

Tim. Always a villain's office, or a fool's.

Dost please thyself in't?

Apem. Ay.

Tim. What! a knave too?"

Act iv. sc. 3.

immediately after which, the unhappy Timon proceeds, with admirable discrimination, to contrast himself and his persecutor; a description which, for strength and severity, as well as truth of censure, has never been exceeded:

" *Tim.* Thou art a slave, whom Fortune's tender arm
With favour never clasp'd; but bred a dog," &c. Act iv. sc. 3.

In revenge for this correct, but tremendous picture of himself, Apemantus, shortly afterwards, presents Timon with a miniature of his own character, so faithfully condensed, that it comprises, in about a dozen words, the entire history of his life; the indiscriminate generosity of his early, and the extravagant misanthropy, of his latter days:—

"The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends."

* I conceive that by "*dangerous nature*" in this passage, is meant a nature, from acute sensibility and sudden misfortune, liable to be overpowered, to be thrown off its poize, and to suffer from mental derangement.

The widely different fate of these two characters, is, likewise, decisive of the opposite origin and nature of their misanthropical conduct. Timon that

"monument,
And wonder of good deeds evilly bestow'd,"

dies broken-hearted, a martyr to self-delusion, and to the ingratitude of mankind; whilst Apemantus, wrapped up in constitutional apathy, travels on unscathed, a general and unfeeling railer on the frailty of his species.

25. **MEASURE FOR MEASURE: 1603.** Mr. Malone's reasons for placing the composition of this play towards the close of 1603, appear to us perfectly unshaken by the arguments which Mr. Chalmers has brought forward for the purpose of referring it to the subsequent year. The validity of the alteration which this gentleman wishes to establish, turns almost altogether on the cogency of the following statement:—

"Claudio," he says, "complains of 'the neglected act being enforced against him.' Isabella laments her being the sister of one Claudio, condemned, on the act of fornication, to lose his head. Now, the act which was thus alluded to, though not with the precision of an Old Bailey solicitor, 'was the statute to restrain all persons from marriage, until their former wives and former husbands be dead,' for which such persons, so offending, were to suffer death, as in cases of felony. It was against this act, then, which did not operate till after the end of the session, on the 7th of July, 1604, that Shakspeare's satire was levelled."

But this very act, it seems from Mr. Chalmers's reference, was passed in the second year of James the First, and how, therefore, could Claudio's complaint of a "neglected act being enforced against him," apply to a statute thus recently issued, and whose operation had only just commenced? The objection is insurmountable, and Claudio's allusion was most assuredly to the act formerly passed on this subject in the first year of Edward the Sixth.

The primary source of the fable of Measure for Measure, is to be traced to the fifth novel of the eighth decade of the *Ecatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio, which was repeated in the tragic histories of Belle Forest; but Shakspeare's immediate original was the play of "Promos and Cassandra" of George Whetstone, published in 1578, and of which the argument, as given by the author, has been annexed by Mr. Steevens to Shakspeare's production. On this elder drama, and on Shakspeare's improvements on its plot, the following pertinent remarks have been lately made by Mr. Dunlop:—

"The crime of the brother," he observes, speaking of Whetstone's comedy, "is softened into seduction: nor is he actually executed for his transgression, as a felon's head is presented in place of the one required by the magistrate. The king being complained to, orders the magistrate's head to be struck off, and the sister begs his life, even before she knows that her brother is safe. Shakspeare has adopted the alteration in the brother's crime, and the substitution of the felon's head. The preservation of the brother's life by this device might have been turned to advantage, as affording a ground for the intercession of his sister; but Isabella pleads for the life of Angelo before she knows her brother is safe, and when she is bound to him by no tie, as the Duke does not order him to marry Isabella. From his own imagination Shakspeare had added the character of Mariana, Angelo's forsaken mistress, who saves the honour of the heroine by being substituted in her place. Isabella, indeed, had refused, even at her brother's intercession, to give up her virtue to preserve his life. This is an improvement on the incidents of the novel, as it imperceptibly diminishes our sense of the atrocity of Angelo, and adds dignity to the character of the heroine. The secret superintendence, too, of the Duke over the whole transaction, has a good effect, and increases our pleasure in the detection of the villain. In the fear of Angelo, lest the brother should take revenge 'for so receiving a dishonoured life, with ransom of such shame,' Shakspeare has given a motive to conduct which, in his prototypes, is attributed to wanton cruelty." *

Of Measure for Measure, independent of the comic characters which afford a rich fund of entertainment, the great charm springs from the lovely example of female excellence in the person of Isabella. Piety, spotless purity, tenderness

* History of Fiction, vol. ii. 1st edit. p. 367, 368.

combined with firmness, and an eloquence the most persuasive, unite to render her singularly interesting and attractive. To save the life of her brother, she hastens to quit the peaceful seclusion of her convent, and moves, amid the votaries of corruption and hypocrisy, amid the sensual, the vulgar, and the profligate, as a being of a higher order, as a ministering spirit from the throne of grace. Her first interview with Angelo, and the immediately subsequent one with Claudio, exhibit, along with the most engaging feminine diffidence and modesty, an extraordinary display of intellectual energy, of dexterous argument, and of indignant contempt. Her pleadings before the lord deputy are directed with a strong appeal both to his understanding and his heart, while her sagacity and address in the communication of the result of her appointment with him to her brother, of whose weakness and irresolution she is justly apprehensive, are, if possible, still more skilfully marked, and add another to the multitude of instances which have established for Shakspeare an unrivalled intimacy with the finest feelings of our nature.

The page of poetry, indeed, has not two nobler passages to produce, than those which paint the suspicions of Isabella as to the fortitude of her brother, her encouragement of his nascent resolution, and the fears which he subsequently entertains of the consequences of dissolution :—

“ *Isab.* O, I do fear thee, Claudio ; and I quake,
Lest thou a feverous life should'st entertain,” &c. Act iii. sc. 1.

On learning the terms which would effect his liberation, his astonishment and indignation are extreme, and he exclaims with vehemence to his sister,—

“ Thou shalt not do't ;”

but no sooner does this burst of moral anger subside, than the natural love of existence returns, and he endeavours to impress Isabella, under the wish of exciting her to the sacrifice demanded for his preservation, with the horrible possibilities which may follow the extinction of this state of being, an enumeration which makes the blood run chill :—

“ *Claud.* O Isabel !
Isab. What says my brother ?
Claud. Death is a fearful thing.
Isab. And shamed life a hateful.
Claud. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot ;” &c. Act iii. sc. 1.

“ It is difficult to decide,” remarks Mr. Douce, “ whether Shakspeare is here alluding to the pains of hell or purgatory. May not the whole be a mere poetical rhapsody, originating in the recollection of what he had read in books of Catholic divinity ? for it is very certain, that some of these were extremely familiar to him.”

Of our author's predilection for the imposing exterior, and fanciful, but often sublime, reveries of the Roman Catholic religion, we have already taken some notice ; and, in reference to the very interesting part which the Duke assumes in this play, under the disguise of a monk, it is the observation of the learned and eloquent Schlegel, “ that Shakspeare, amidst the rancour of religious parties, takes a delight in painting the condition of a monk, and always represents his influence as beneficial. We find in him none of the black and knavish monks, which an enthusiasm for the protestant religion, rather than poetical inspiration, has suggested to some of our modern poets. Shakspeare merely gives his monks an inclination to busy themselves in the affairs of others, after renouncing the world for themselves ; with respect, however, to pious frauds, he does not represent them as very conscientious. Such are the parts acted by the monk in *Romeo and Juliet*, and another in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and even by the Duke,

whom, contrary to the well-known proverb, the cowl seems really to make a monk." *

26. KING LEAR: 1604. Both the chronologers have assigned to this tragedy the date of 1605; but it appears to us more probable that its production is to be attributed to the close of the year 1604. It certainly was written between the publication of Harsnet's "Declaration of Popish Impostures, in 1603, and the Christmas of 1606; for Shakspeare undoubtedly borrowed, as the commentators have justly observed, the fantastic names of several spirits from the above mentioned work, whilst in the entry of Lear on the Stationers' Registers, on the 26th of November, 1607, it is expressly recorded to have been played, during the preceding Christmas, before His Majesty at Whitehall.

It is from the following facts, as established by Mr. Chalmers, together with two or three additional circumstances, that we have been induced to throw back a few months the era of the composition of this play. "Lear is ascertained," observes Mr. Chalmers, "to have been written, after the month of October, 1604; say the commentators (or rather says Mr. Malone): for, King James was proclaimed King of Great Britain, on the 24th of October 1604; and, it is evident, that Shakspeare made a minute change in an old rhyming saw:—

"Fy, fa, fum,
I smell the blood of an *English* man;"

which Shakspeare, with great attention to the times, changed, in the following manner:—

"His word was still, Fie, foh, fum,
I smell the blood of a *British* man."

But the fact is, that there was issued from Greenwich a royal proclamation, on the 13th of May, 1603; declaring that, till a complete union, the King held, and esteemed, the two realms, as presently united, and as one kingdom; and the poets, Daniel and Drayton, who wrote gratulatory verses on his accession, spoke of the two kingdoms as united, thereby, into one realm, by the name of Britain; and of the inhabitants of England and Scotland, as one people, by the denomination of British." And he then adds, in a note: "Before King James arrived at London, Daniel offered to him 'A Panegyrike congratulatory, delivered to the King's most excellent Majesty at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire;' which was printed, in 1603, for Blount, with a Defence of Rhyme:—

"Lo here the glory of a greater day
Than *England* ever heretofore could see
In all her days.—
And now she is, and now in peace therefore
Shake hands with union, O thou mightie state,
Now thou art all *Great Britain*, and no more,
No Scot, no English now, nor no debate."

We see here, that even before James took possession of his capital, poetry had adopted the very language which Shakspeare has used in his Lear: and that, as early as the 13th of May, 1603, a proclamation had been issued, declaratory of the King's resolution to hold and esteem the two realms as united, and as forming but one kingdom.

These two events, therefore, were of themselves a sufficient ground for the alteration which our bard thought proper to introduce, and which, if it occurred, as we suppose, anterior to the definitive proclamation of October, 1604, must have been considered, by the monarch, as the greater compliment, on that very account.

A strong additional argument in favour of this chronology, may be drawn from the attempt made in 1605, to impose on the public the old play of King Leir for the successful drama of our author. This production, which had been entered at

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 169.

Stationers' Hall in 1594, was, with this view, re-entered on the Stationer's books on the 8th of May, 1605, and the entry terminates with these words, "as it was lately acted."

Now, as it was intended that the expression *lately* should be referred, by the reader, to our author's play, for which this was meant to be received, it follows, as an almost necessary consequence, from the common acceptation of the term, that the Lear of Shakspeare had been acted some months anteriorly, and was not then actually performing, an inference which agrees well with the date which we have adopted, but cannot be made to accord with Mr. Malone's supposition of Shakspeare's tragedy appearing in April, 1605, and the spurious claimant in May, when there is every reason to conclude that our poet's drama was then nightly, or, at least, weekly delighting the public.

Another circumstance in support of the era which we have chosen for this play, is to be derived from the consideration, that, in Mr. Malone's arrangement, Cymbeline is assigned, and, in our opinion, correctly assigned, to the year 1605, while in consequence of the removal of The Winter's Tale to the epoch of 1613, a change founded on apparently substantial grounds, the year 1604 is left perfectly open to the admission for which we contend.

To the numerous sources mentioned by the * commentators, whence Shakspeare may have drawn the materials of his Lear, is to be added the celebrated French Romance entitled "Perceforest," which next to the "Gesta Romanorum," and the "History of Geoffrey of Monmouth," is the oldest authority extant. The story of King Leyr, as here related, corresponds, in all its leading features, with the fable of our poet. †

Of this noble tragedy, one of the first productions of the noblest of poets, it is scarcely possible to express our admiration in adequate terms. Whether considered as an effort of art, or as a picture of the passions, it is entitled to the highest praise. The two portions of which the fable consists, involving the fate of Lear and his daughters, and of Gloster and his sons, influence each other in so many points, and are blended with such consummate skill, that whilst the imagination is delighted by diversity of circumstances, the judgment is equally gratified in viewing their mutual co-operation towards the final result; the coalescence being so intimate, as not only to preserve the necessary unity of action, but to constitute one of the greatest beauties of the piece.

Such, indeed, is the interest excited by the structure and concatenation of the story, that the attention is not once suffered to flag. By a rapid succession of incidents, by sudden and overwhelming vicissitudes, by the most awful instances of misery and destitution, by the boldest contrariety of characters, are curiosity and anxiety kept progressively increasing, and with an impetus so strong, as nearly to absorb every faculty of the mind and every feeling of the heart.

Victims of frailty, calamity, or vice, in an age remote and barbarous, the actors in this drama are brought forward with a strength of colouring, which, had the scene been placed in a more civilised era, might have been justly deemed too dark and ferocious, but is not discordant with the earliest heathen age of Britain. The effect of this style of characterisation is felt occasionally throughout the entire play, but is particularly visible in the delineation of the vicious personages of the drama, the parts of Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and Cornwall being loaded, not only with ingratitude of the deepest dye, but with cruelty of the most savage and diabolical nature; they are the criminals, in fact, of an age where vice may be supposed to reign with lawless and gigantic power, and in which the extrusion of Gloster's eyes might be an event of no unfrequent occurrence.

* For these consult not only the Variorum edition of Shakspeare, but Mr. Chalmers's Supplemental Apology, and Mr. Douce's Illustrations. See also the story of Lear, from Caxton's Chronicle of 1480, extracted by Mr. Dibdin, in the British Bibliographer, vol. ii. p. 578.

† Warton tells us, that Perceforest was originally a metrical romance, and written about the year 1220. History of Poetry, vol. i. p. 464.

Had this mode of casting his characters in the extreme, been applied to the remainder of the dramatis personæ, we should have lost some of the finest lessons of humanity and wisdom that ever issued from the pen of an uninspired writer; but, with the exception of a few coarsenesses, which remind us of the barbarous period to which the story is referred, and of a few incidents rather revolting to credibility, but which could not be detached from the original narrative, the virtuous agents of the play exhibit the manners and the feelings of civilisation, and are of that mixed fabric which can alone display a just portraiture of the nature and composition of our species.

The characters of Cordelia and Edgar, it is true, approach nearly to perfection, but the filial virtues of the former are combined with such exquisite tenderness of heart, and those of the latter with such bitter humiliation and suffering, that grief, indignation, and pity, are instantly excited. Very striking representations are also given of the rough fidelity of Kent, and of the hasty credulity of Gloster; but it is in delineating the passions, feelings and afflictions of Lear, that our poet has wrought up a picture of human misery which has never been surpassed, and which agitates the soul with the most overpowering emotions of sympathy and compassion.

The conduct of the unhappy monarch having been founded merely on the impulses of sensibility, and not on any fixed principle or rule of action, no sooner has he discovered the baseness of those on whom he had relied, and the fatal mistake into which he had been hurried by the delusions of inordinate fondness and extravagant expectation, than he feels himself bereft of all consolation and resource. Those to whom he had given all, for whom he had stripped himself of dignity and power, and on whom he had centered every hope of comfort and repose in his old age, his inhuman daughters, having not only treated him with utter coldness and contempt, but sought to deprive him of all the respectability, and even of the very means of existence, what in a mind so constituted as Lear's, the sport of intense and ill-regulated feeling, and tortured by the reflection of having deserted the only child who loved him, what but madness could be expected as the result? It was, in fact, the necessary consequence of the reciprocal action of complicated distress and morbid sensibility; and, in describing the approach of this dreadful infliction, in tracing its progress, its height, and subsidence, our poet has displayed such an intimate knowledge of the workings of the human intellect, under all its aberrations, as would afford an admirable study for the enquirer into mental physiology. He has also in this play, as in that of Hamlet, finely discriminated between real and assumed insanity, Edgar, amidst all the wild imagery which his imagination has accumulated, never touching on the true source of his misery, whilst Lear, on the contrary, finds it associated with every object and every thought, however distant or dissimilar. Not even the Orestes of Euripides, or the Clementina of Richardson, can, as pictures of disordered reason, be placed in competition with this of Lear; it may be pronounced, indeed, from its truth and completeness, beyond the reach of rivalry.

Of all the miseries incident to humanity, the apprehension of approaching loss of reason is, perhaps, the most dreadful. Lear, on discovering the ingratitude of his eldest daughter, feels compunction for his treatment of the youngest: "I did her wrong," he exclaims, and such is the violence of the shock and the keenness of his sufferings, that, even in this first conflict of resentment and sorrow, he deprecates this heaviest of calamities: —

"O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!" Act i. sc. 5.

But when Regan, following the example of her sister, inflicts upon him still greater dishonour, the fearful assurance is intimately felt, and he predicts its visitation in positive terms: —

—————"You think, I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep:—

I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep.—*O fool, I shall go mad!*"

Act ii. sc. 4.

Nothing can impress us with a more tremendous idea of this awful state of mind, than the feelings of Lear during his exposure to the tempest. What, under other circumstances, would have been shrunk from with alarm and pain, is now unfelt, or only so, as a relief from deeper horrors:—

"Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But *where the greater malady is fix'd,*
The lesser is scarce felt," &c.

Act iii. sc. 4.

It is at the close of this scene that the misfortune which he has dreaded so much, overtakes him: "his wits," as Kent observes, "begin to unsettle;" but it is not a total dereliction of intellect: Lear is neither absolutely delirious, nor maniacal; but he labours under that species of hallucination which leaves to the wretched sufferer a sense of his own unhappiness: a state of being, beyond all others, calculated to awaken the most thrilling sensations of pity.

A picture of more terrible grandeur, or of wilder sublimity, than what occurs, during the exposure of the aged monarch to the impetuous fury of the storm, was never imagined. Every thing conspires to render it unparalleled in its powers of impression. On a night, when the conflicting elements of fire, air, and water deafen nature itself with their uproar; on a night,

— "wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
Keep their fur dry,"

Act iii. sc. 1.

is the miserable old king driven out by his unnatural daughters, to wander over a bleak and barren heath in search of shelter, destitute of even common necessities, a very beggar on the bounty of his former subjects, and accompanied only by his fool, and the faithful though banished Kent. It is with difficulty that they persuade him to take refuge from the storm; at length, he yields, at the same time addressing the fool in terms which, perhaps more than any other lines in the play, unveil the native goodness of his heart:—

— "Come, your hovel.
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee."

Act iii. sc. 2.

No sooner, however, has the fool entered this hovel, than he returns horror-struck, followed by Edgar, who rushes on the heath, an almost naked maniac, and exclaiming,

"Away! the foul fiend follows me!—
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind."

Act iii. sc. 4.

The dialogue which now ensues between these extraordinary characters is, of itself, a proof of the boundless expansion of the poet's mind. The torrent of agonizing grief and resentment which flows from Lear, abandoned by his daughters, verging towards insanity, and aware of its approach; the wild exuberance of fancy which thrills in the phrenzied accents of Edgar, who, under the disguise of a madman tormented by demons, is flying from death threatened by a father; and the quaint mixture of wisdom, pleasantry, and satire in the language of the honest fool, who yet heightens, while he means to alleviate the distresses of his master, are elements of mental strife which harmonise with, and add a kind of illimitable horror to the storm which howls around.

Nor inferior to this in merit, though of a totally different cast, is the scene in which the exhausted monarch, having been lulled to sleep through the effects of an opiate, is awakened by the sound of music, whilst Cordelia, hanging over him,

with an almost breathless anxiety, at length ventures to address him. The language of the poor old man, in the moment of partial reminiscence, is, beyond any other effort of human composition, simple and affecting:—

“ *Cor.* How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong, to take me out of the grave:” &c. Act. iv. sc. 7.

27. **CYMBELINE: 1605.** This play, if not, in the construction of its fable, one of the most perfect of our author's productions, is, in point of poetic beauty, of variety and truth of character, and in the display of sentiment and emotion, one of the most lovely and interesting. Nor can we avoid expressing our astonishment at the sweeping condemnation which Johnson has passed upon it; charging its fiction with folly, its conduct with absurdity, its events with impossibility; terming its faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.

Of the enormous injustice of this sentence, nearly every page of *Cymbeline* will, to a reader of any taste or discrimination, bring the most decisive evidence. That it possesses many of the too common inattentions of Shakspeare, that it exhibits a frequent violation of costume, and a singular confusion of nomenclature, cannot be denied; but these are trifles light as air, when contrasted with its merits, which are of the very essence of dramatic worth, rich and full in all that breathes of vigour, animation, and intellect, in all that elevates the fancy, and improves the heart, in all that fills the eye with tears, or agitates the soul with hope and fear.

In possession of excellences, vital as these must be deemed, cold and fastidious is the criticism that, on account of irregularities in mere technical detail, would shut its eyes upon their splendour. Nor are there wanting critics of equal learning with, and superior taste to Johnson, who have considered what he has branded with the unqualified charge of “confusion of manners,” as forming, in a certain point of view, one of the most pleasing recommendations of the piece. Thus Schlegel, after characterising *Cymbeline* as one of Shakspeare's most wonderful compositions, adds,—“He has here connected a novel of Boccacio with traditional tales of the ancient Britons reaching back to the times of the first Roman Emperors, and he has contrived, by the most gentle transitions, to blend together into one harmonious whole the social manners of the latest times with the heroic deeds, and even with appearances of the gods.”* It may be also remarked, that if the unities of time and place be as little observed in this play, as in many others of the same poet, unity of character and feeling, the test of genius, and without which the utmost effort of art will ever be unavailing, is uniformly and happily supported.

Imogen, the most lovely and perfect of Shakspeare's female characters, the pattern of connubial love and chastity, by the delicacy and propriety of her sentiments, by her sensibility, tenderness, and resignation, by her patient endurance of persecution from the quarter where she had confidently looked for endearment and protection, irresistibly seizes upon our affections; and when compelled to fly from the paternal roof, from

“ A father cruel, and a step-dame false,
A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,
That hath her husband banished,”

she is driven to assume, under the name of Fidele, the disguise of a page, we follow her footsteps with the liveliest interest and admiration.

The scenes which disclose the incidents of her pilgrimage; her reception at the cave of Belarius; her intercourse with her lost brothers, who are ignorant of their birth and rank; her supposed death, funeral rites, and resuscitation, are wrought up with a mixture of pathos and romantic wildness, peculiarly characteristic of

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 183.

our author's genius, and which has had but few successful imitators. Among these few, stands pre-eminent the poet Collins, who seems to have trodden this consecrated ground with a congenial mind, and who has sung the sorrows of Fidele in strains worthy of their subject, and which will continue to charm the mind and soothe the heart "till pity's self be dead."

When compared with this fascinating portrait, the other personages of the drama appear but in a secondary light. Yet they are adequately brought out, and skilfully diversified; the treacherous subtlety of Iachimo, the sage experience of Belarius, the native nobleness of heart, and innate heroism of mind, which burst forth in the vigorous sketches of Guiderius and Arviragus, the temerity, credulity, and penitence of Posthumus, the uxorious weakness of Cymbeline, the hypocrisy of his Queen, and the comic arrogance of Cloten, half fool and half knave, produce a striking diversity of action and sentiment.

Of this latter character, the constitution has been thought so extraordinary, and involving elements of a kind so incompatible, as to form an exception to the customary integrity and consistency of our author's draughts from nature. But the following passage from the pen of an elegant female writer, will prove, that this curious assemblage of frequently opposite qualities, has existed, and no doubt did exist in the days of Shakspeare:—

"It is curious that Shakspeare should, in so singular a character as Cloten, have given the exact prototype of a being whom I once knew. The unmeaning frown of the countenance; the shuffling gait; the burst of voice; the bustling insignificance; the fever and ague fits of valour; the froward tetchiness; the unprincipled malice; and, what is most curious, those occasional gleams of good sense, amidst the floating clouds of folly which generally darkened and confused the man's brain; and which, in the character of Cloten, we are apt to impute to a violation of unity in character; but in the some time Captain C——n, I saw that the portrait of Cloten was not out of nature." *

Poetical justice has been strictly observed in this drama; the vicious characters meet the punishment due to their crimes, while virtue, in all its various degrees, is proportionably rewarded. The scene of retribution, which is the closing one of the play, is a masterpiece of skill; the development of the plot, for its fullness, completeness, and ingenuity, surpassing any effort of the kind among our author's contemporaries, and atoning for any partial incongruity which the structure or conduct of the story may have previously displayed.

28. MACBETH: 1606. We have now reached what may justly be termed the greatest effort of our author's genius; the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld.

Than the conception of the character of Macbeth, it is scarcely possible to conceive a picture more original and grand! Too great and good to fall beneath the common temptations to villany, Shakspeare has called in the powers of supernatural agency, and seizing upon ambition as the vulnerable part of his hero's character, and placing him between the suggestions of hell on one side, and those of his fiend-like wife on the other, he has, in conformity to the letter of the traditions which were before him, brought about a catastrophe, which, as he has conducted it, is the most awful on dramatic record. For, whilst the influence of the world unknown throws a dread solemnity over the principal incidents, the volition of Macbeth remains sufficiently free to enable the poet to bring into full play the strongest passions of the human breast.

Originally brave, magnanimous, humane, and gentle,

—— "not without ambition; but without
The illness should attend it,"

and wishing to do that holily which he would highly; fully sensible also of the enormous ingratitude and guilt which he should incur by the assassination of the

* Letters of Anna Seward, vol. iii. p. 246.

monarch who had loaded him with honours, and who was moreover his kinsman and his guest, the struggle would necessarily have terminated on the side of virtue, had not the predictions of the weird sisters, in part instantly accomplished, and assuming the form therefore of inevitable destiny, concealed from his bewildered senses the eternal truth, that not from fate, but from his own agency alone could spring the commission of a crime, whose very suggestion had at first filled him with horror. But even this delusion, which seemed for a time to deaden the sense of responsibility, would have failed in its effect, had not the ferocious and sarcastic eloquence of Lady Macbeth been called in to its aid: dazzled by the splendour with which she clothes the expected issue of the deed; indignant at the charge of cowardice, to which she artfully imputes his irresolution, and allured by the means which she has planned as a security from detection, he, at length, rushes into the snare.

No sooner, however, has the assassination of Duncan been perpetrated, than the virtuous principles which had slumbered in the bosom of Macbeth, rise up to accuse and condemn him. Conscience-stricken, and recoiling with horror from the atrocity of his deed, he becomes the victim of the most agonising remorse; he feels deserted both by God and man, and unable even to deprecate the wrath which night and day pursues him:

“ I have done the deed :—Did'st thou not hear a noise ?—
There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried, *Murder!*
That they did wake each other : I stood and heard them.—
One cried, *God bless us!* and, *Amen!* the other ;” &c.

Act ii. sc. 2.

To this dread of vengeance from offended heaven, is soon added the apprehension of punishment from mankind, his keen abhorrence of his own iniquity leading him to paint, in the strongest colours, the detestation and resentment which it must have incurred from others. This fear of retaliation from his fellow-creatures, together with the awful prospect of retribution in another world, produce a complete revolution in his character; he is exhibited distrustful, treacherous, and cruel, sweeping from existence, without pity or hesitation, all whose talents, virtues, sufferings, or pretensions, seem to endanger a life of which, though hourly becoming more wretched and depraved, he anticipates the close with horror and dismay.

To the very last, the contest is kept up with tremendous energy, between the native vigour of a brave mind, and the debilitating effects of a guilty, and, therefore, a fear-creating conscience. The lesson is, beyond every other, salutary and important, as it proves that the dominion of one perverted passion subjugates to its own depraved purposes the very principles of virtue itself; the sensibility of Macbeth to his own wickedness, giving birth to terrors which urge him on to reiterated murder, and finally to irretrievable destruction.

The management of the fable of Macbeth presents us with a remarkable instance of the profound art of Shakspeare, in condensing into one representation, and with an uninterrupted progress of the action, an extensive and closely concatenated series of events, forming a perfect cycle of influential incidents and passions, on a scale commensurate with that of nature, and for which it were in vain to look, where the unrelaxing unities of time and place have imposed their fetters on the poet.

“ Let any one, for instance,” observes Schlegel, “ attempt to circumscribe the gigantic picture of Macbeth's murder, his tyrannical usurpation, and final fall, within the narrow limits of the unity of time, and he will then see, that, however many of the events which Shakspeare successively exhibits before us in such dread array, he may have placed anterior to the commencement of the piece, and made the subject of after recital, he has altogether deprived it of its sublimity of import. This drama, it is true, comprehends a considerable period of time: but in the rapidity of its progress, have we leisure to calculate this? We see, as it were, the fates weaving their dark web on the bosom of time; and the storm and whirlwind of events, which impel the hero to the first daring attempt, which afterwards lead him to commit innumerable crimes to

secure the fruits of it, and drive him at last, amidst numerous perils, to his destruction in the heroic combat, draw us irresistibly along with them. Such a tragical exhibition resembles the course of a comet, which, hardly visible at first, and only important to the astronomic eye, when appearing in the heaven in a nebulous distance, soon soars with an unheard of and perpetually increasing rapidity towards the central point of our system, spreading dismay among the nations of the earth, till in a moment, with its portentous tail, it overspreads the half of the firmament with flaming fire." *

But, in fact, as hath been remarked by the same admirable critic, Macbeth, in its construction, bears a striking affinity to the celebrated trilogy of Æschylus, which included the Agamemnon, the Choephoræ, and the Eumenides, or Furies, pieces which were successively represented in one day.

"The object of the first is the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, on his return from Troy. In the second, Orestes avenges his father by killing his mother: *facto pius et sceleratus eodem*. This deed, although perpetrated from the most powerful motives, is repugnant however to natural and moral order. Orestes as a Prince was, it is true, entitled to exercise justice even on the members of his own family; but he was under the necessity of stealing in disguise into the dwelling of the tyrannical usurper of his throne, and of going to work like an assassin. The memory of his father pleads his excuse; but although Clytemnestra has deserved death, the blood of his mother still rises up in judgment against him. This is represented in the Eumenides in the form of a contention among the gods, some of whom approve of the deed of Orestes, while others persecute him, till at last the divine wisdom, under the figure of Minerva, reconciles the opposite claims, establishes a peace, and puts an end to the long series of crimes and punishments which desolated the royal house of Atreus.

"A considerable interval takes place between the period of the first and second pieces, during which Orestes grows up to manhood. The second and third are connected together immediately in the order of time. Orestes takes flight after the murder of his mother to Delphi, where we find him at the commencement of the Eumenides.

"In each of the two first pieces, there is a visible reference to the one which follows. In Agamemnon, Cassandra and the chorus prophesy, at the close, to the arrogant Clytemnestra and her paramour Ægistus, the punishment which awaits them at the hands of Orestes. In the Choephoræ, Orestes, immediately after the execution of the deed, finds no longer any repose; the furies of his mother begin to persecute him, and he announces his resolution of taking refuge in Delphi.

"The connection is therefore evident throughout, and we may consider the three pieces, which were connected together even in the representation, as so many acts of one great and entire drama. I mention this as a preliminary justification of Shakspeare and other modern poets, in connecting together in one representation a larger circle of human destinies, as we can produce to the critics who object to this the supposed example of the ancients." †

To these observations of M. Schlegel, the following excellent remarks have been added by a writer in the Monthly Review:—

"Shakspeare's Macbeth," says this critic, "bears a close resemblance to this trilogy of Æschylus, which gives, in three distinct acts, a history of the house of Agamemnon. In Macbeth, also, are three acts or deeds, distinct from each other, and separated by long intervals of time; namely, the regicide of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, and the fall of Macbeth; the first serving to shew how he attained his elevation, the second how he abused it, and the third how he lost it. A chorus of supernatural beings, (the witches of Shakspeare operate like the furies of Æschylus), in both these tragic poems, hovers over the fate of the hero; and, by impressing on the spectator the consciousness of an irresistible necessity, all the extenuation which the atrocities could admit is introduced. Criticism, in comparing the master-pieces of these master-poets, may be permitted to hesitate, but not to draw stakes. To the plot or fable of Shakspeare must be allowed the merit of possessing, in the higher degree, wholeness, connection, and ascending interest. The character of Clytemnestra may be weighed without disparagement against that of Lady Macbeth: but all the other delineations are superior in our Shakspeare; his characters are more various, more marked, more consistent, more natural, more intuitive. The style of Æschylus, if distinguished for a majestic energetic simplicity, greatly preferable to the mixt metaphors and puns of Shakspeare, has still neither the richness of thought nor the versatility of diction which we find displayed in the English tragedy." ‡

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. i. p. 352, 353.

† Ibid. p. 95, 96.

‡ Monthly Review, vol. lxxxi. p. 119, 120.

The supernatural machinery of this play, which forms one of its most striking features, is founded on a species of superstition that, during the life-time of Shakspeare, prevailed in England and Scotland in an unprecedented degree. *Witchcraft* had attracted the attention of government under the reign of Henry the Eighth, in whose thirty-third year was enacted a Statute which adjudged all Witchcraft and Sorcery to be Felony without Benefit of Clergy; but, at the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, the evil seems to have been greatly on the increase, for Bishop Jewel, preaching before the Queen, in 1558, tells her, —“It may please your Grace to understand that Witches and Sorcerers within these few last years are marvellously increased within your Grace’s realm. Your Grace’s subjects pine away, even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft. I pray God they never practise further then upon the subject.”* How prevalent the delusion had become in the year 1584, we have the most ample testimony in the ingenious work of Reginald Scot, entitled “*The Discoverie of Witchcraft*,” which was written, as the sensible and humane author has informed us, “in behalfe of the poore, the aged, and the simple;”† and it reflects singular discredit on the age in which it was produced, that a detection so complete, both with regard to argument and fact, should have failed in effecting its purpose. But the infatuation had seized all ranks, with an influence which rivalled that resulting from an article of religious faith, and Scot begins his work with the observation, that “the fables of Witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that fewe or none can, now adaies, with patience indure the hand and correction of God. For if any adversitie, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corne, cattell, or libertie happen unto them, by and by they exclaime uppon witches;”‡ and, in his second chapter, he declares, “I have heard to my greefe some of the ministerie affirme, that they have had in their parish at one instant, xvij or xviii witches: meaning such as could worke miracles supernaturallie;”§ a declaration which, in a subsequent part of his book, he more particularly applies, when he informs us, that “seventeene or eightene were condemned at once at St. Osees in the countie of Essex, being a whole parish, though of no great quantitie.”**

The mischief, however, was but in progress, and received a rapid acceleration from the publication of the “*Dæmonologie*” of King James, at Edinburgh, in the year 1597. The origin of this very curious treatise was probably laid in the royal mind, in consequence of the supposed detection of a conspiracy of two hundred witches with Dr. Fian, “Register to the Devil,” at their head, to bewitch and drown His Majesty, on his return from Denmark, in 1590. James attended the examination of these poor wretches with the most eager curiosity, and the most willing credulity; and, when Agnis Tompson confessed, that she, with other witches to the number just mentioned, “went altogether by sea, each one in her riddle, or sieve, with flaggons of wine, making merry and drinking by the way, to the kirk of North Berwick, in Lothian, where, when they had landed, they took hands and danced, singing all with one voice,—

“Commer (gossip) go ye before, commer goe yè,
Gif ye will not go before, commer let me:”

and “that Geilis Duncane did go before them, playing he said reel on a Jew’s trump,” James immediately sent for Duncane, and listened with delight to his performance of the witches’ reel on the Jew’s harp!

On Agnis, however, asserting, that the Devil had met them at the Kirk, His

* Strype’s *Annals of Reformation*, vol. i. p. 8. The apprehension expressed at the close of this quotation, was realised some years afterwards, when a Mrs. Dier was accused of conjuration and witchcraft, because the Queen had been “under excessive anguish *by pains of her teeth*: insomuch that she took no rest for divers nights.”—Vide Strype’s *Annals*, vol. iv. p. 7.

† Epistle to Sir Roger Manwood, p. 1.

‡ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, chap. i. p. 1, 2.

§ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, chap. i. p. 4.

** Discourse of Divels and Spirits, p. 543; annexed to the *Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

Majesty could not avoid expressing some doubts; when, taking him aside, she “declared unto him the very words which had passed between him and his Queen on the first night of their marriage, with their answer each to other; whereat the King wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed all the Devils in Hell could not have discovered the same.” *

That the particulars elicited from the confessions of these unfortunate beings, which, it is said, “made the King in a wonderful admiration,” formed the basis of the *Dæmonologie*, may be, therefore, readily admitted. It is also to be deplored that, weak and absurd as this production now appears to us, its effects on the age of its birth, and for a century afterwards, were extensive, and melancholy in the extreme. It contributed, indeed, more than any other work on the subject, to rivet the fetters of credulity; and scarcely had a twelvemonth elapsed from its publication; before its result was visible in the destruction, in Scotland, of not less than six hundred human beings at once, for this imaginary crime! †

The succession of James to the throne of Elizabeth served but to propagate the contagion; for no sooner had he reached this country, than his *Dæmonologie* re-appeared from an English press, being printed at London, in 1603, in quarto, and with a Preface to the Reader, which commences by informing him of “the fearefull abounding at this time in this Countrey, of these detestable slaves of the Divil, the Witches, or enchanterers;” ‡ a declaration which, during the course of the same year, was accompanied by a new statute against Witches, one clause of which enacts, that

“Any one that shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any evill or wicked spirit, or consult, covenant with, entertaine or employ, feede or reward, any evill or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charme, or enchantment; or shall use, practise, or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charme, or sorcery, whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed, in his or her body, or any part thereof, such offenders, duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer death.” §

We cannot wonder if measures such as these, which stamped the already existing superstitions with the renewed authority of the law, and with the influence of regal argument and authority, should render a belief in the existence of witchcraft almost universal; fashion and interest on the one hand, and ignorance and fear on the other, mutually contributing, by concealing or banishing doubt, to disseminate error, and preclude detection.

Who those were who, at this period, had the misfortune to be branded with the appellation of Witches; what deeds were imputed to them, and what was the nature of their supposed compact with the Devil, are questions which will be most satisfactorily answered in the words of Reginald Scot, whose book is not only extremely scarce, but highly curious and entertaining; and two or three chapters from this copious treasury of superstition, with a very few comments from other sources, will exhaust this part of the subject.

“The sort of such as are said to be witches,” writes Scot, “are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious, and papists; or such as knowe no religion; in whose drousie minds the divell hath gotten a fine seat; so as, what mischeefe, mischance, calamitie, or slaughter is brought to passe, they are easilie persuaded the same is doone by themselves; imprinting in their minds an earnest and constant imagination thereof. They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, divelish, and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with spirits; so firme and stedfast in their opinions, as whosoever

* These extracts are taken from a pamphlet entitled, “*Newes from Scotland*,” reprinted in the *Gent. Magazine*, vol. xlix. p. 449. See also *Gent. Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 556.

† See Nashe’s *Lenten Stuff*, 1599, as quoted by Mr. Reed, in his *Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 5. note.

‡ King James’s *Works*, as published by James, Bishop of Winton, folio, 1616, p. 91.

§ This act against witches was not repealed until the year 1736, being the ninth of George the Second!

shall onelie have respect to the constancie of their words uttered, would easilie beleieve they were true indeed.

“ These miserable wretches are so odious unto all their neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them, or denie them anie thing they aske : whereby they take upon them ; yea, and sometimes thinke, that they can doo such things as are beyond the abilitie of human nature. These go from house to house, and from doore to doore for a pot full of milke, yest, drinke, pottage, or some such releefe ; without the which they could hardlie live : neither obtainng for their service and paines, nor by their art, nor yet at the divels hands (with whome they are said to make a perfect and visible bargaine) either beautie, monie, promotion, welth, worship, pleasure, honor, knowledge, learning, or any other benefit whatsoever.

“ It falleth out many times, that neither their necessities nor their expectation is answered or served, in those places where they beg or borrowe ; but rather their lewdness is by their neighbors reproved. And further, in tract of time the witch wareth odious and tedious to her neighbors ; and they againe are despised and despited of hir ; so as sometimes she cursseth one, and sometimes another ; and that from the maister of the house, his wife, children, cattell, etc. to the little pig that lieth in the stie. Thus in processe of time they have all displeased hir, and she hath wished evil luck unto them all ; perhaps with cursses and imprecations made in forme. Doubtless (at length) some of hir neighbors die, or falle sicke ; or some of their children are visited with diseases that ver them strangelie : as apoplexies, epilepsies, convulsions, hot fevers, wormes, etc. Which by ignorant parents are supposed to be the vengeance of witches. Yea and their opinions and conceits are confirmed and maintained by unskillfull physicians : according to the common saieng ; “ *Inscitiæ pallium maleficium et incantatio*,” Witchcraft and incantment is the cloke of ignorance : whereas indeed evill humours, and not strange words, witches, or spirits are the causes of such diseases. Also some of their cattell perish, either by disease or mischance. Then they, uppon whom such adversities fall, weighing the fame that goeth upon this woman (hir words, displeasure, and cursses meeting so justly with their misfortune) doo not onlie conceive, but also are resolved, that all their mishaps are brought to passe by hir onelie means.

“ The witch on the other side expecting hir neighbors mischances, and seeing things sometimes come to passe according to hir wishes, cursses, and incantations (for Bodin himself confesseth, that not above two in a hundred of their witchings or wishings take effect), being called before a Justice, by due examination of the circumstances is driven to see hir imprecations and desires, and hir neighbors harmes and losses to concurre, and as it were to take effect : and so confesseth that she (as a goddes) hath brought such things to passe. Wherein, not onelie she, but the accuser, and also the Justice are fowlie deceived and abused ; as being thorough hir confession and other circumstances persuaded (to the injurie of Gods glorie) that she hath doone, or can doo that which is proper onelie to God himselfe.

“ Another sort of witches there are, which be absolutelie cooseners : These take upon them, either for glorie, fame, or gaine, to doo any thing, which God or the divell can doo : either for fortelling things to come, bewraieng of secrets, curing of maladies, or working of miracles.” *

To this chapter from Scot, which we have given entire, may be added the admirable description of the abode of a witch from the pen of Spenser, who, as War-ton hath observed, copied from living objects, and had probably been struck with seeing such a cottage, in which a witch was supposed to live:—

“ There in a gloomy hollow glen she found
A little cottage built of stickes and reedes
In homely wise, and wald with sods around ;
In which a Witch did dwell, in loathly weedes
And wilful want, all carelesse of her needes ;
So choosing solitarie to abide
Far from all neighbours, that her divelish deeds
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off unknowne whomever she envide.” †

This very striking picture for ever fixed the character of the habitation allotted to a witch ; thus in a singularly curious tract, entitled “ Round about our Coal-Fire,” published about the close of the seventeenth century, and which details, in a pleasing manner, the traditions of the olden time, as a source of Christmas amusement, it is said that “ a Witch must be a hagged old woman, living in a little

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book i. chap. 3. p. 7—9.

† Todd's Spenser, vol. iv. p. 480, 481. Faerie Queene, book iii. canto 7. stanza 6 and note.

rotten cottage, under a hill, by a wood-side, and must be frequently spinning at the door: she must have a black cat, two or three broom-sticks, an imp or two, and two or three diabolical teats to suckle her imps."

Of the wonderful feats which the various kinds of witches were supposed capable of performing, Scot has favoured us with the following succinct enumeration: there are three sorts of witches, he tells us,

"One sort can hurt and not helpe, the second can helpe and not hurt, the third can both helpe and hurt. Among the hurtfull witches there is one sort more beastlie than any kind of beasts, saving wolves: for these usually devour and eate yong children and infants of their owne kind. These be they that raise haile, tempests, and hurtfull weather; as lightening, thunder, etc. These be they that procure barrennesse in man, woman, and beast. These can throwe children in waters, as they walke with their mothers, and not be seene. These can make horsse kicke, till they cast their riders. These can passe from place to place in the aire invisible. These can so alter the mind of judges, that they can have no power to hurt them. These can procure to themselves and to others, taciturnitie and insensibilitie in their torments. These can bring trembling to the hands, and strike terror into the minds of them that apprehend them. These can manifest unto others, things hidden and lost, and foreshew things to come; and see them as though they were present. These can alter men's minds to inordinate love or hate. These can kill whom they list with lightening and thunder. These can take away man's courage.—These can make a woman miscarrie in childbirth, and destroye the child in the mother's wombe, without any sensible means either inwardlie or outwardlie applied. These can with their looks kill either man or beast.—

"Others doo write, that they can pull downe the moone and the starres. Some write that with wishing they can send needles into the livers of their enemies. Some that they can trans-ferre corne in the blade from one place to another. Some, that they can cure diseases supernaturallie, flie in the aire, and danse with divels. Some write, that they can plaie the part of *Sucubus*, and contract themselves to *Incubus*.—Some saie they can transubstantiate themselves and others, and take the forms and shapes of asses, wolves, ferrets, cowes, asses, horsse, hogs, etc. Some say they can keepe divels and spirits in the likenesse of todes and cats.

"They can raise spirits (as others affirme), drie up springs, turne the course of running waters, inhibit the sune, and staie both day and night, changing the one into the other. They can go in and out at awger holes, and saile in an egge shell, a cockle or muscle shell, through and under the tempestuous seas.—They can bring soules out of the graves. They can teare snakes in pieces.—They can also bring to pass, that chearne as long as you list, your butter will not come; especiallie, if either the maids have eaten up the creame, or the good-wife have sold the butter before in the market." *

The only material accession which the royal James has made to this curious catalogue of the deeds of witchcraft, consists in informing us, that these aged and decrepit slaves of Satan "make pictures of waxe or clay, that by the roasting thereof, the persons that they beare the name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continuall sicknesse;" † and his mode of explaining how the devil performs this marvel, is a notable instance both of his ingenuity and his eloquence. This deed, he says,

"Is verie possible to their master to performe: for although that instrument of waxe have no vertue in that turne doing, yet may he not very well, even by the same measure, that his conjured slaves melt that waxe at the fire, may hee not, I say, at these same times, subtilly, as a spirit, so weaken and scatter the spirits of life of the patient, as may make him on the one part, for faintnesse, to sweat out the humour of his bodie, and on the other part, for the not concurrence of these spirits, which causes his digestion, so debilitate his stomache, that this humour radically continually sweating out on the one part, and no newe good sucke being put in the place thereof, for lacke of digestion on the other, he at last shall vanish away, even as his picture will doe at the fire? And that knavish and cunning workeman, by troubling him, onely at sometimes, makes a proportion, so neere betwixt the working of the one and the other, that both shall end as it were at one time." P. 117.

It remains to notice the nature of the compact or bargain, which witches were believed to enter into with their seducer, and the species of homage which they

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book i. chap. 1. p. 9.

† James's Works, by Winton, p. 116.

were compelled to pay him, and here again we must have recourse to Scot, not only as the most compressed, but as the most authentic detailer of this strange credulity of his times.

“The order of their bargaine or profession,” says he, “is double; the one solemne and publike; the other secret and private. That which is called solemne or publike, is where witches come together at certaine assemblies, at the times prefixed, and doo not onelie see the divell in visible forme, but confer and talke familiarlie with him. In which conference the divell exhorteth them to observe their fidelitie unto him, promising them long life and prosperitie. Then the witches assembled, commend a new disciple (whom they call a novice) unto him: and if the divell find that young witch apt and forward in renunciation of christian faith, in despising anie of the seven sacraments, in treading upon crosses, in spetting at the time of the elevation, in breaking their fast on fasting daies, and fasting on sundaies: then the divell giveth foorth his hand, and the novice joining hand in hand with him, promiseth to observe and keepe all the divels commandements.

“This doone, the divell beginneth to be more bold with hir, telling hir plainlie, that all this will not serve his turne; and therefore requireth homage at hir hands: yea he also telleth hir, that she must grant him both hir bodie and soule to be tormented in everlasting fire; which she yeeldeth unto. Then he chargeth hir, to procure as manie men, women, and children also, as she can, to enter into this societie. Then he teacheth them to make ointments of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the aire, and accomplish all their desires. So as, if there be anie children unbaptized, or not garded with the signe of the crosse, or orisons; then the witches may and doo catch them from their mothers sides in the night, or out of their cradles, or otherwise kill them with their ceremonies; and after buriall steale them out of their graves, and seeth them in a caldron, until their flesh be made potable. Of the thickest whereof they make ointments, whereby they ride in the aire; but the thinner potion they put into flaggons, whereof whosoever drinketh, observing certaine ceremonies, immediatelie becommeth a maister or rather a mistresse in that practise and facultie.

“Their homage with their oth and bargaine is received for a certeine terme of yeares; sometimes for ever. Sometimes it consisteth in the deniall of the whole faith, sometimes in part.—And this is doone either by oth, protestation of words, or by obligation in writing, sometimes sealed with wax, sometimes signed with blood, sometimes by kissing the divels bare buttocks.

“You must also understand, that after they have delicatlie banketted with the divell and the ladie of the fairies; and have eaten up a fat oxe, and emptied a butt of malmesie, and a binne of bread at some noble man’s house, in the dead of night, nothing is missed of all this in the morning! For the ladie Sibylla, Minerva, or Diana with a golden rod striketh the vessel and the binne, and they are fully replenished againe.” After mentioning that the bullock is restored in the same magical manner, he states it as an “infallible rule, that everie fortnight, or at the least every moneth, each witch must kill one child at the least for hir part.” He also relates from Bodin, that “at these magicall assemblies, the witches never faile to danse, and whiles they sing and danse, everie one hath a broome in hir hand, and holdeth it up aloft.” *

To these circumstances attending the meetings of this unhallowed sisterhood, King James adds, that Satan, in order that “hee may the more vively counterfeit and scorne God, oft times makes his slaves to conveene in those very places, which are destinate and ordained for the conveening of the servants of God (I meane by churches):—further, witches oft times confesse, not only his conveening in the church with them, but his occupying of the pulpit.”† For this piece of information James seems to have been indebted to the confessions of Agnis Tompson; but he also relates, that the devil, as soon as he has induced his votaries to renounce their God and baptism, “gives them his marke upon some secret place of their bodie, which remaines soare unhealed, whilst his next meeting with them, and thereafter ever insensible, however it be nipped or pricked by any;” a seal of distinction which, he tells us at the close of his treatise, is of great use in detecting them on their trial, as “the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensiblenes thereof,” was considered as a positive proof of their craft. His Majesty, however, proceeds to mention another mode of ascertaining their guilt,

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, book iii. chap. 1, 2. p. 40—42.

† Works apud Winton, p. 112, 113.

terminating the paragraph in a manner not very flattering to his female subjects, or very expressive of his own gallantry.

“The other is,” he tells us, “their fleeting on the water: for as in a secret murder, if the dead carcase be at any time thereafter handled by the murderer, it will gush out of blood, as if the blood were crying to the heaven for revenge of the murderer, God having appointed that secret supernaturall signe, for triall of that secret unnaturall crime, so it appears that God hath appointed (for a supernaturall signe of the monstrous impietie of Witches) that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosome, that have shaken off them the sacred water of Baptisme, and wilfully refused the benefite thereof: No, not so much as their eyes are able to shed teares (threaten and torture them as you please) while first they repent (God not permitting them to dissemble their obstinacie in so horrible a crime) albeit the women-kind especially be able otherwayes to shed teares at every light occasion when they will, yea, although it were dissemblingly like the Crocodiles.” *

Such are the chief features of this gross superstition, as detailed by the writers of the period in which it most prevailed in this country. Scot has taken infinite pains in collecting, from every writer on the subject, the minutiae of Witchcraft, and his book is expanded to a thick quarto, in consequence of his commenting at large on the particulars which he had given in his initiatory chapters, for the purpose of their complete refutation and exposure; a work of great labour, and which shows, at every step, how deeply this credulity had been impressed on the subjects of Elizabeth. James, on the other hand, though a man of considerable erudition, and, in some respects, of shrewd good sense, wrote in defence of this folly, and, unfortunately for truth and humanity, the doctrine of the monarch was preferred to that of the sage.

When such was the creed of the country, from the throne to the cottage; when even the men of learning, with few † exceptions, ranged themselves on the side of the monologie, it was highly judicious in Shakspeare, in his dramatic capacity, to adopt, as a powerful instrument of terror, the popular belief; popular both in his own time, and in that to which the reign of Macbeth is ‡ referred. And, in doing this, he has shown not less taste than genius; for in the principal authorities to which he has had recourse for particulars; in the Discoverie of Scot, in the Dæmonologie of James, and even in the Witch of Middleton, a play now allowed to have been anterior to his own drama, the ludicrous and the frivolous are blended, in a very large proportion, with that which is calculated to excite solemnity and awe. With exquisite skill has he separated the latter from the former, exalting it with so many touches of grandeur, and throwing round it such an air of dreadful mystery, that, although the actual superstition on which the machinery is founded, be no more, there remains attached to it, in consequence of passing through the mind of Shakspeare, such a portion of what is naturally inherent in the human mind, in relation to its apprehensions of the invisible world of spirits, such a sublime, though indistinct conception of powers unknown and mightier far than we, that nearly the same degree of grateful terror is experienced from the perusal or representation of Macbeth in modern days, as was felt in the age of its production.

In the very first appearance, indeed, of the Weird Sisters to Macbeth and Banquo on the blasted heath, we discern beings of a more awful and spiritualised cha-

* King James's Works apud Winton, p. 111, 135, 136.

† Among these we find the mighty name of Bacon, this great man attributing, in the Tenth Century of his Natural History, the achievements and the confessions of witches and wizards to the effects of a morbid imagination.

‡ To the traditions of Boethius and Holinshed, we may add a modern authority in the person of Sir John Sinclair, who tells us that “In Macbeth's time Witchcraft was very prevalent in Scotland, and two of the most famous witches in the kingdom lived on each hand of Macbeth, one at Collace, the other not far from Dunsinnan House, at a place called the Cape. Macbeth applied to them for advice, and by their counsel built a lofty Castle upon the top of an adjoining hill, since called Dunsinnan. The moor where the Witches met, which is in the parish of St. Martin's, is yet pointed out by the country-people, and there is a stone still preserved which is called *the Witches Stones*.”—Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. xx. p. 242.

racter than belongs to the vulgar herd of witches. “What are these,” exclaims the astonished Banquo,—

“What are these,
So wither’d, and so wild in their attire?”

Act i. sc. 3.

Even when unattended by any human witnesses, when supporting the dialogue merely among themselves, Shakspeare has placed in the mouths of these agents imagery and diction of a cast so peculiar and mysterious, as to render them objects of alarm and fear, emotions incompatible with any tendency towards the ludicrous. But when, wheeling round the magic cauldron, in the gloomy recesses of their cave, they commence their incantations, chanting in tones wild and unearthly, and heard only during the intervals of a thunder-storm, their metrical charm, while flashes of subterranean fire obscurely light their haggard features, their language seems to breathe of hell, and we shrink back, as from beings at war with all that is good. Yet is the impression capable of augmentation, and is felt to have attained its acme of sublimity and horror, when, in reply to the question of Macbeth,

“How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is’t you do?”

they reply,—

“*A deed without a name.*”

Much, however, of the dread, solemnity, and awe which is experienced in reading this play, from the intervention of the witches, is lost in its representation on the stage, owing to the injudicious custom of bringing them too forward on the scene; where, appearing little better than a group of old women, the effect intended by the poet is not only destroyed, but reversed. Their dignity and grandeur must arise, as evil beings gifted with superhuman powers, from the undefined nature both of their agency and of their external forms. Were they indistinctly seen, though audible, at a distance, and, as it were, through a hazy twilight, celebrating their orgies, and with shadowy and gigantic shape flitting between the pale blue flames of their cauldron and the eager eye of the spectator, sufficient latitude would be given to the imagination, and the finest drama of our author would receive in the theatre that deep tone of supernatural horror with which it is felt to be so highly imbued in the solitude of the closet.

CHAPTER XII.

Observations on *Julius Cæsar*; on *Antony and Cleopatra*; on *Coriolanus*; on *The Winter’s Tale*; on *The Tempest* — Dissertation on the General Belief of the Times in the Art of Magic, and on Shakspeare’s Management of this Superstition as exhibited in *The Tempest* — Observations on *Othello*; on *Twelfth Night*, and on the Plays ascribed to Shakspeare — Summary of Shakspeare’s Dramatic Character.

THE Roman tragedy of Shakspeare, including the three pieces of *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, exhibit the poet under a new aspect. We have seen him dramatise the annals of his own country with matchless skill and effect; we have beheld him touching with a discriminative pencil the heroes of ancient Greece, and he now brings before us, clothed in the majesty of republican greatness, or surrounded with the splendour of illimitable power, the most illustrious patriots and warriors of the Roman world.

The task of combining a faithful adherence to the records of history with that grandeur and freedom of conception which characterise the unfettered poet, could alone have been achieved by the genius of Shakspeare. He has, accordingly, not only fixed his scene at Rome, during the days of Coriolanus or of Cæsar, but he has resuscitated the manners and the modes of thinking of their respective ages. We enter with enthusiasm into the characters and fortunes of these masters of the civilised globe, and the patriotism and martial glory, the very feelings and public life of the eternal city again start into existence.

The chronology of these three plays having been ascertained with as much probability as the subject will admit, it is only necessary to observe, as a preliminary remark, that the dates of the first and second are adopted from Mr. Malone, and that of the third from Mr. Chalmers; and to these critics the reader is referred for facts and inferences which, not being susceptible as we conceive of further extension or improvement, it would be useless here to repeat.

29. JULIUS CÆSAR: 1607. Of this tragedy Brutus is the principal and most interesting character, and to the development of his motives, and to the result of his actions, is the greater part of the play appropriated; for it is not the fall of Cæsar, but that of Brutus, which constitutes the catastrophe. Cæsar is introduced indeed expressing that characteristic confidence in himself, which has been ascribed to him by history; and his influence over those who surround him, the effect of high mental powers and unrivalled military success, is represented as very great; but he takes little part in the business of the scene, and his assassination occurs at the commencement of the third act.

While the conqueror of the world is thus in some degree thrown into the shade, Brutus, the favourite of the poet, is brought forward, not only adorned with all the virtues attributed to him by Plutarch, but, in order to excite a deeper interest in his favour, and to prove, that not jealousy, ambition, or revenge, but unalloyed patriotism was the sole director of his conduct, our author has drawn him as possessing the utmost sweetness and gentleness of disposition, sympathising with all that suffer, and unwilling to inflict pain but from motives of the strongest moral necessity. He has most feelingly and beautifully painted him in the relations of a master, a friend, and a husband; his kindness to his domestics, his attachment to his friends, and his love for Portia, to whom he declares, that she is

“ As dear to him, as are the ruddy drops
That visit his sad heart,”

demonstrating, that nothing but a high sense of public duty could have induced him to lift his hand against the life of Cæsar.

It is this struggle between the humanity of his temper and his ardent and hereditary love of liberty, now threatened with extinction by the despotism of Cæsar, that gives to Brutus that grandeur of character and that predominancy over his associates in purity of intention, which secured to him the admiration of his contemporaries, and to which posterity has done ample justice through the medium of Shakspeare, who has placed the virtues of Brutus, and the contest in his bosom between private regard and patriotic duty, in the noblest light; wringing even from the lips of his bitterest enemy, the fullest eulogium on the rectitude of his principles, and the goodness of his heart:—

“ *Ant.* This was the noblest Roman of them all:
All the conspirators, save only he,” &c.

Act v. sc. 5.

In the conduct and action of this drama, though closely pursuing the occurrences and characters as detailed by Plutarch in his life of Brutus, there is a great display of ingenuity, and much mechanism in the concentration of the events, producing that integrity and unity, which, without any modification of the truth of history, moulds a small portion of an immense chain of incidents into a perfect and satisfactory whole. The formation of the conspiracy, the death of the dicta-

tor, the harangue of Antony and its effects, the flight of Brutus and Cassius, their quarrel and reconciliation, and finally their noble stand for liberty against the sanguinary and atrocious triumvirate, are concatenated with the most happy art; and though, after the fall of Cæsar, nothing but the patriotic heroism of Brutus and Cassius is left to occupy the stage, the apprehensions and the interest which have been awakened for their fate, are sustained, and even augmented to the last scene of the tragedy.

30. **ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: 1608.** Shakspeare has here spread a wider canvas; he has admitted a vast variety of groups, some of which are crowded, and some too isolated, whilst in the back ground are dimly seen personages and events that, for the sake of perspicuity, ought to have been brought forward with some share of boldness and relief. The subject, in fact, is too complex and extended, to admit of a due degree of simplicity and wholeness, and the mind is consequently hurried by a multiplicity of incidents, for whose introduction and succession we are not sufficiently prepared.

Yet, notwithstanding these defects, this is a piece which gratifies us by its copiousness and animation; such, indeed, is the variety of its transactions, and the rapidity of its transitions, that the attention is never suffered, even for a moment, to grow languid; and, though occasionally surprised by abruptness, or want of connection, pursues the footsteps of the poet with eager and unabated delight.

Neither is the merit of this play exclusively founded on the vivacity and entertainment of its fable; it presents us with three characters which start from their respective groups with a prominence, with a depth of light and shade, that gives the freshness of existing energy to the records of far distant ages.

The martial but voluptuous Antony, whose bosom is the seat of great qualities and great vices; now magnanimous, enterprising, and heroic: now weak, irresolute, and slothful: alternately the slave of ambition and of effeminacy, yet generous, open-hearted, and unsuspecting, is strikingly opposed to the cold-blooded and selfish Octavius. The keeping of these characters is sustained to the last, whilst Cleopatra, the mistress of every seductive and meretricious art, a compound of vanity, sensuality, and pride, adored by the former, and despised by the latter, an instrument of ruin to the one, and of greatness to the other, is decorated, as to personal charms and exterior splendour, with all that the most lavish imagination can bestow.

31. **CORIOLANUS: 1609.** This play, which refers us to the third century of the Republic, is of a very peculiar character, involving in its course a large intermixture of humorous and political matter. It affords us a picture of what may be termed a Roman electioneering mob; and the insolence of newly-acquired authority on the part of the tribunes, and the ungovernable license and malignant ribaldry of the plebeians, are forcibly, but naturally expressed. The popular anarchy, indeed, is rendered highly diverting through the intervention of Menenius Agrippa, whose sarcastic wit, and shrewd good sense, have lent to these turbulent proceedings a very extraordinary degree of interest and effect. His "pretty tale," as he calls it, of "the belly and the members," which he recites to the people, during their mutiny occasioned by the dearth of corn, is a delightful and improved expansion of the old apologue, originally attributed to Menenius by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but taken immediately by Shakspeare from Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus, and from Camden's Remains.

The serious and elevated persons of the drama are delineated in colours of equal, if not superior strength. The unrivalled military prowess of Coriolanus, in whose nervous arm, "Death, that dark spirit," dwelt; the severe sublimity of his character, his stern and unbending hauteur, and his undisguised contempt of all that is vulgar, pusillanimous, and base, are brought before us with a raciness and power of impression, and, notwithstanding a very liberal use both of the sentiments and language of his Plutarch, with a freedom of outline which, even in Shakspeare, may be allowed to excite our astonishment.

Among the female characters, a very important part is necessarily attached to the person of Volumnia; the fate of Rome itself depending upon her parental influence and authority. The poet has accordingly done full justice to the great qualities which the Cheronean sage has ascribed to this energetic woman; the daring loftiness of her spirit, her bold and masculine eloquence, and, above all, her patriotic devotion, being marked by the most spirited and vigorous touches of his pencil.

The numerous vicissitudes in the story; its rapidity of action; its contrast of character; the splendid vigour of its serious, and the satirical sharpness and relish of its more familiar scenes, together with the animation which prevails throughout all its parts, have conferred on this play, both in the closet and on the stage, a remarkable degree of attraction.

32. **THE WINTER'S TALE: 1610.** That this play was written after the accession of King James, appears probable from the following lines:

————— "If I could find example
Of thousands, that had struck anointed kings
And *flourished after*, I'd not do't; but since
Nor brass, nor stone, nor parchment, bears not one,
Let villany itself forswear it." Act i. sc. 2.

"If, as Mr. Blackstone supposes," observes Mr. Douce, "this be an allusion to the death of the Queen of Scots, it exhibits Shakspeare in the character of a gringing flatterer, accommodating himself to existing circumstances, and is moreover an extremely severe one. But the perpetrator of that atrocious murder did flourish many years afterwards. May it not rather be designed as a compliment to King James, on his escape from the Gowrie conspiracy, an event often brought to the people's recollection during his reign, from the day on which it happened being made a day of thanksgiving?"*

Thus Osborne tells us, that "amongst a number of other Novelties, he (King James) brought a new Holyday into the Church of England, wherein God had public thanks given him for his Majesties deliverance out of the hands of E. Goury. And this fell out upon Aug. 5;"† and from Wilson we learn, the title which this day bore in the almanacks of the time:—"The fifth of August this year (1603) had a new title given to it. 'The Kings Deliveries in the North must resound here.'"‡

From an allusion to this play and to *The Tempest*, in Ben Jonson's "Induction to Bartholomew Fair," 1614, there is some reason to conclude, that these dramas were written within a short period of each other, and that *The Winter's Tale* was the elder of the two. "He is loth," he says, "to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries."§ Now, it will be found in the next article, that we have no trifling data for attributing the composition of *The Tempest* to the year 1611; and, could it be rendered highly probable, that the production of *The Winter's Tale* did not occur before 1610, an almost incontrovertible support would be given to our chronology of both plays. It happens, therefore, very fortunately, that in a note by Mr. Malone, annexed to his chronological notice of *The Winter's Tale*, in the edition of our author's plays of 1803, a piece of information occurs, that seems absolutely to prove the very fact of which we are in search. It appears, says this critic, from the entry which has been quoted in a preceding page, that *The Winter's Tale* "had been originally licensed by Sir George Buck;" and he concludes by remarking, that "though Sir George Buck obtained a reversionary grant of the office of Master of the Revels, in 1603, which title Camden has given him in the edition of his *Britania* printed in 1607, it appears from various documents in the Pells-office, that he did not get complete possession of his place till August, 1610." In fact,

* Illustrations vol. i. p. 347.

† Osborne's Works, 8vo, 1689, p. 477.

‡ History of Great Britain, folio, 1653, p. 12.

§ "I am inclined to think," says Mr. Malone, "that he (Jonson) joined these plays in the same censure, in consequence of their having been produced at no great distance of time from each other."—That this passage was intended, however, as a censure on Shakspeare remains doubtful.

Edmond Tilney, the predecessor of Sir George Buck, died at the very commencement of October, 1610, and was buried at Leatherhead, in Surrey, on the sixth of the same month; and it is very likely that, during his illness, probably commencing in August, Sir George, as his destined successor, might officiate for him.

We learn from Mr. Vertue's manuscripts, that *The Winter's Tale* was acted at court in 1613, a circumstance which, though it may lead us to infer that its popularity on the public stage had been considerable, by no means necessarily warrants the supposition which Mr. Malone is inclined to make, that it had passed through all its stages of composition, public performance, and court exhibition, during the same year.

Instead, therefore, of conjecturing with Mr. Malone that this play was written in 1594, or 1602, or 1604, or 1613, for such has been the vacillation of this gentleman in his chronology of the piece, or with Mr. Chalmers, in 1601, we believe it to have been written, for the reasons which we have already assigned, and which will receive additional corroboration from the arguments to be adduced under the next head, towards the close of 1610, and to have been licensed and performed during the succeeding year.*

"The observation by Dr. Warburton," remarks Mr. Douce, "that *The Winter's Tale*, with all its absurdities, is very entertaining, though stated by Dr. Johnson to be just, must be allowed at the same time to be extremely frigid." Certainly had Warburton said this, or nothing but this, he had merited the epithet; but Mr. Douce has been misled by Dr. Johnson, for most assuredly Warburton has not said this, but, on the contrary, has spoken of the play not only with taste and feeling, but in a tone of enthusiasm. "This play, throughout," says he, "is written in the very spirit of its author. And in telling this homely and simple, though agreeable country-tale,

"Our sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,
Warbles his native wood-notes wild."

"This was necessary to observe in mere justice to the play: as the meanness of the fable, and the extravagant conduct of it, had misled some of great name into a wrong judgment of its merit; which, as far as it regards sentiment and character, is scarce inferior to any in the whole collection." This, indeed, is all that Warburton has said on the general character of *The Winter's Tale*, but it is high praise, and coincides in almost every respect with what Mr. Douce has himself very justly declared on the same subject, when, in the passage immediately following that which we have already quoted from his *Illustrations*, he adds,—"In point of fine writing it may be ranked among Shakspeare's best efforts. The absurdities pointed at by Warburton, together with the whimsical anachronisms of Whitson pastorals, Christian burial, an emperor of Russia, and an Italian painter of the fifteenth century, are no real drawbacks on the superlative merits of this charming drama. The character of Perdita will remain for ages unrivalled; for where shall such language be found as she is made to utter?" †

As Shakspeare was indebted for the story of *The Winter's Tale* to the "*Dorastus and Fawnia*" of Robert Greene, which was published in 1588, so it is probable that he was under a similar obligation for its name to "*A booke entitled A Wynter Nyght's Pastime*," which was entered at Stationers' Hall on May the 22d, 1594. It is, also, not unlikely that the adoption of the title might influence the nature of the composition; for, as Schlegel has remarked, "*The Winter's Tale* is as appropriately named as *The Midsummer-Night's Dream*. It is one of those tales which are peculiarly calculated to beguile the dreary leisure of a long winter evening, which are even attractive and intelligible to childhood,

* It appears, from Mr. Malone, that the copy of *The Winter's Tale*, licensed by Sir George Buck, had been lost.

† *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. i. p. 364.

and which, animated by fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion, invested with the decoration of a poetry lowering itself, as it were, to the simplicity of the subject, transport even manhood back to the golden age of imagination." *

Such indeed is the character of the latter and more interesting part of this drama, which, separated by a chasm of sixteen years from the business of the three preceding acts, may be said, in some measure, to constitute a distinct play. The fourth act, especially, is a pastoral of the most fascinating description, in which Perdita, pure as

" the fann'd snow
That's bolted by the northern blasts twice o'er," Act iv. sc. 3.

ignorant of her splendid origin, yet, under the appearance of a shepherd's daughter, acting with such an intuitive nobleness of mind, that—

" nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself," Act iv. sc. 3.

exhibits a portrait fresh from nature's loveliest pencil, where simplicity, artless affection, and the most generous resignation are sweetly blended with a fortitude at once spirited and tender. Thus, when Polixenes, discovering himself at the sheep-shearing, interdicts the contract between Perdita and his son, and threatens the former with a cruel death, if she persist in encouraging the attachment, the reply which she gives is a most beautiful development of the qualities of mind and heart which we have just enumerated:—

" Per. Even here undone?
I was not much afeard: for once, or twice," &c. Act iv. sc. 3.

The comic characters of this play, which are nearly confined to the last two acts, form a striking contrast and relief to the native delicacy and elegance of manners which distinguish every sentiment and action of the modest and unaffected Perdita; her reputed father and brother and the witty rogue Autolycus being drawn with those strong but natural strokes of broad humour which Shakspeare delighted to display in his characterisation of the lower orders of society. That "snapper up of unconsidered trifles," his frolic pedlar, is one of the most entertaining specimens of wicked ingenuity that want and opportunity ever generated.

33. THE TEMPEST: 1611. The dates assigned by the two chronologers, for the composition of this drama, seem to be inferred from premises highly inclusive and improbable. Mr. Malone conceives it to have been written in 1612, because its title appears to him to have been derived from the circumstance of a dreadful tempest occurring in the October, November, and December of the year 1612; and Mr. Chalmers has exchanged this epoch for 1613, because there happened "a great tempest of thunder and lightning, on Christmas day, 1612." "This intimation," he subjoins, "necessarily carries the writing of *The Tempest* into the subsequent year, since there is little probability, that our poet would write this enchanting drama, in the midst of the tempest, which overthrew so many mansions, and wrecked so many ships."

It is very extraordinary that, when all the circumstances which could lead to

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. ii. p. 181.—That Shakspeare considered the romantic incidents of this play as properly designated by the appellation of *an old tale*, is evident from his own application of the phrase to several parts of the plot. Thus, in the second scene of the fifth act, we find it used in the following passages:—

"How goes it now, sir? this news, which is called true, is so like *an old tale*."

"2d Gent. What, pray you, became of Antigonus, that carried hence the child?

3d Gent. Like *an old tale* still."

And again, in the next scene:—

"Paul. That she is living,
Were it but told, you should be hooted at,
Like *an old tale*."

the suggestion of the title of *The Tempest*, are to be found in books, to which, from his allusions, we know our author must have had recourse, and in events which took place, during the two years immediately preceding the period that we have fixed upon, and at the very spot referred to in the play, these critics should have imagined that a series of stormy weather occurring at home, or a single storm on Christmas day, could have operated with the poet in his choice of a name.

It is scarcely possible to avoid smiling at the objection which Mr. Chalmers so seriously brings forward against the conjecture of his predecessor, founded on the improbability of the poet's writing his *Tempest* in the midst of a tempest; a mode of reputation which could only have been adopted one would think under the supposition, that Shakspeare, during these three stormy months, had wanted the protection of a roof. The inference, however, which he draws from his own storm, on Christmas day, namely, that *The Tempest* must necessarily have been written in 1613, is still less tenable than the position of Mr. Malone; for we are told, on the authority of Mr. Vertue's Manuscripts, "that the *Tempest* was acted by John Heminge and the rest of the King's company, before Prince Charles, the Lady Elizabeth, and the Prince Palatine elector, in the beginning of the year 1613." Now we learn from Wilson the historian, that the Prince Palatine was married to the Lady Elizabeth in February, 1613, her brother Prince Charles leading her to church; and on this occasion, no doubt, it was, that *The Tempest*, having been received the preceding season with great favour and popularity, was re-performed; for Wilson tells us, that in consequence of these nuptials, "the feastings, maskings, and other Royall formalities, were as troublesome ('tis presum'd) to the Lovers, as the relation of them here may be to the reader;" and he adds, in the next page, that they were "tired with feasting and jollity." *

But how can this relation be reconciled with the chronology of Mr. Chalmers? for, if *The Tempest*, as he supposes, was written in 1613, it must have been commenced and finished in the course of one month! a rapidity of composition which, considering the unrivalled excellence of this drama, is scarcely within the bounds of probability. Beside, were *The Tempest* the production of January, 1613, it must have been written on the spur of the occasion, and for the nuptials in question; and is it to be supposed that no reference to such an event would be found throughout a play composed expressly to adorn, if not to compliment, the ceremony?

If we can, therefore, ascertain, that all the circumstances necessary for the suggestion, not only of the title of *The Tempest*, but of a considerable part of its fable, may have occurred to Shakspeare's mind anterior to the close of 1611, and would particularly press upon it, during the two years preceding this date, it may, without vanity be expected, that the epoch which we have chosen, will be preferred to those which we have just had reason to pronounce either trivial or improbable.

So far back as to 1577, have Mr. Steevens and Dr. Farmer referred for some particulars to which Shakspeare was indebted for his conception of the "foul witch Sycorax," and her god Setebos; † but the circumstances which led to the name of the play, to the storm with which it opens, and to some of the wondrous incidents on the enchanted island, commence with the publication of

* Wilson's *Historie of Great Britain*, p. 64, 65.

† The idea of the witch, says Mr. Steevens, might have been caught from Dionyse Settle's *Reporte of the Last Voyage of Captaine Frobisher*, 12mo. bl. l. 1577. He is speaking of a woman found on one of the islands described:—"The old wretch, whome divers of our Saylers snpposed to be a Divell, or a *Witche*, plucked off her buskins, to see if she were clouen footed, and for her ougly hewe and deformitie, we let her goe."

Eden tells us in his *History of Travayle*, 1577, that "the gigantes, when they found themselves fettered, roared like bulls, and cried upon *Setebos* to help them."

Mr. Douce thinks that the name of Caliban's mother, Sycorax, was probably taken by Shakspeare from the following passage in "*Batman uppon Bartholome*," 1582:—"The raven is called *corvus* of *Corax* . . . it is said that *ravens birdes* be fed with *dews* of heaven all the time that they have no black feathers, by benefite of age." Lib. xii. c. 10 —Illustrations, vol. i. p. 8.

Raleigh's "Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana," a book that was printed at London in 1596, and in which this great man, after mentioning the Channel of Bahama, adds, — "The rest of the Indies for calms, and diseases, are very troublesome; and the Bermudas, a hellish sea, for thunder lightning, and storms."

From this publication, therefore, our author acquired his first intimation of the "still vexed Bermoothes," which was repeated by the appearance of Hackluyt's Voyages, in 1600, in which, as Dr. Farmer observes, he might have seen a description of Bermuda, by Henry May, who was shipwrecked there in 1593." But the event which immediately gave rise to the composition of *The Tempest*, was the "Voyage of Sir George Sommers," who was shipwrecked on Bermudas in 1609, and whose adventures were given to the public by Silvester Jourdan, one of his crew, with the following title:—"A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Divels: By Sir Thomas Gates, Sir Geo. Sommers, and Captayne Newport, and divers others." In this publication, Jourdan informs us, that "the Islands of the Bermudas, as every man knoweth, that hath heard, or read of them, were never inhabited by any Christian, or heathen, people, but ever esteemed, and reputed, a most prodigious, and enchanted place, affording nothing but gusts, stormes and foul weather; which made every navigator and mariner to avoid them as Scylla and Charybdis, or as they would shun the Devil himselfe."

Now these particulars in Jourdan's book, taken in conjunction with preceding intimations, appear to us to have been fully adequate to the purpose of suggesting to the creative mind of Shakspeare, without any reference to succeeding pamphlets on the subject, or to storms at home, the name, the opening incidents, and the magical portion of his drama; for, when Mr. Chalmers refers us to "A Plaine Description of the Bermudas now called Sommer islands," it should be recollected, that, even on his own chronology, this work, which was printed in 1613, must, unless it had appeared on the first days of the new year, have come too late to have furnished the poet with any additional information.

That *The Tempest* had been produced anterior to the stormy autumn of 1612 seems to have been the opinion of Mr. Douce; for, alluding to the use which the commentators have made of the mere date of Sommers's voyage, he adds,—"but the important particulars of his shipwreck, from which it is exceedingly probable that the outline of a considerable part of this play was borrowed, has been unaccountably overlooked;" and then, after quoting the title, and noticing some of the particulars of Jourdan's book, and introducing a passage from Stowe's *Annals* descriptive of Sommers's shipwreck on the "dreadful coast of the Bermodes, which island were of all nations said and supposed to bee enchanted and inhabited with witches and devills," he proceeds thus:—"Now if some of these circumstances in the shipwreck of Sir George Sommers be considered, it may possibly turn out that they are 'the particular and recent event which determined Shakspeare to call his play *The Tempest*,' instead of 'the great tempest of 1612,' which has already been supposed to have suggested its name, and which might have happened after its composition."*

From these circumstances, and this chain of reasoning, we are induced to conclude, that *The Tempest* was written towards the close of 1611, and that it was brought on the stage early in the succeeding year.

The Tempest is, next to *Macbeth*, the noblest product of our author's genius. Never were the wild and the wonderful, the pathetic and sublime, more artfully and gracefully combined with the sportive sallies of a playful imagination, than in this enchantingly attractive drama. Nor is it less remarkable, that all these excellencies of the highest order are connected with a plot which, in its mechanism, and in the preservation of the unities, is perfectly classical and correct.

The action, which turns upon the restoration of Prospero to his former dignities,

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 5—7.

involving in its successful issue, the union of Ferdinand and Miranda, the temporary punishment of the guilty, and the reconciliation of all parties, is simple, integral, and complete. The place is confined to a small island, and, for the most part, to the cave of Prospero, or its immediate vicinity, and the poet has taken care to inform us twice in the last act, that the time occupied in the representation, has not exceeded three hours.*

Yet within this sport space are brought together, and without any violation of dramatic probability or consistency, the most extraordinary incident and the most singular assemblage of characters, that fancy, in her wildest mood, has ever generated. A magician possessed of the most awful and stupendous powers; a spirit of the air beautiful and benign; a goblin hideous and malignant, a compound of the savage, the demon, and the brute; and a young and lovely female who has never seen a human being, save her father, are the inhabitants of an island, no otherwise frequented than by the fantastic creations of Prospero's necromantic art.

A solemn and mysterious grandeur envelops the character of Prospero, from his first entrance to his final exit, the vulgar magic of the day being in him blended with such a portion of moral dignity and philosophic wisdom, as to receive thence an elevation, and an impression of sublimity, of which it could not previously have been thought susceptible.

The exquisite simplicity, ingenuous affection, and unsuspecting confidence of Miranda, united as they are with the utmost sweetness and tenderness of disposition, render the scenes which pass between her and Ferdinand beyond measure delightful and refreshing; they are, indeed, as far as relates to their share of the dialogue, perfectly paradisaical. Nor is the conception of this singularly situated character less striking, than the consistency with which, to the very last, it is supported, throughout all its parts.

On the wildly-graceful picture of Ariel, that "delicate spirit," whose occupation it was,

——— "To tread the ooze
Of the salt deep;
To run upon the sharp wind of the north:
To do business in the veins o' the earth,
When it is bak'd with frost;
—— to dive into the fire; to ride
On the curl'd clouds;
—— to fetch dew
From the still vex'd Bermoothes;"

what language can express an adequate encomium! All his thoughts and actions, his pastimes and employments, are such as could only belong to a being of a higher sphere, of a more sublimated and æthereal existence than the race of man. Even the very words which he chants, seem to refer to "no mortal business," and to form "no sound that the earth owes."

Of a nature directly opposed to this elegant and sylph-like essence, is the hag-born monster Caliban, one of the most astonishing productions of a mind exhaustless in the creation of all that is novel, original, and great. Generated by a devil and a witch, deformed, prodigious, and obscene, and breathing nothing but malice, sensuality, and revenge, this fearful compound is yet, from the poetical vigour of his language and ideas, highly interesting to the imagination. Imagery, derived from whatever is darkly horrible and mysteriously repulsive, clothe the expression of his passions or the denunciation of his curses; whilst, even in his moments of hilarity, the barbarous, the grotesque, and the romantic, alter-

* "Alon. If thou beest Prospero,
Give us particulars of thy preservation:
How thou hast met us here, who *three hours since* Act v. sc. 1.
Were wreck'd upon this shore."

"Alon. What is this maid, with whom thou wast at play?
Your eld'st acquaintance cannot be *three hours.*" Act. v. sc. 2.

nately, or conjointly, sustain, with admirable harmony, the keeping of his character.

That the system of Magic or Enchantment, which has given so much attraction to this play, was at the period of its production an article in the popular creed of general estimation, and, even among the learned, received with but little hesitation, may be clearly ascertained from the writers of Shakspeare's times. Thus, Howard, Earl of Northampton, in his "Defensative against the poyson of supposed Prophecies," 1583; Scot, in his "Discoverie of Witchcraft" and "Discours of Divels and Spirits," 1584; James, in his "Dæmonologie," 1603; Mason, in his "Anatomie of Sorcerie," 1612; and finally, Burton, in his "Anatomie of Melancholy," 1617, all bear witness, in such a manner to the fact, as proves, that, of the existence of "The Art of Sorcery," however unlawful it might be deemed by many, few presumed to doubt. The very title of Howard's book informs us, that "invocations of damned spirits" and "judicials of astrology" were "causes of great disorder in the commonwealth;" and in the work, speaking of the same arts, he adds,—"We need not rife in the monuments of former times, so long as the present age wherein we live may furnish us with store of most strange examples." Scot declares, in his "Epistle to the Reader," that "conjurors and enchanters make us fooles still, to the shame of us all;" and in the 42d chapter of his 15th book, he has inserted a copy of a letter written to him by a professor of the necromantic art, who had been condemned to die for his supposed diabolical practices, but who, through his own repentance, and the mediation of Lord Leicester with the Queen, had been reprieved. An extract or two from this curious epistle, will place in a striking light the great prevalence of the credulity on which we are commenting.

"Maister R. Scot, according to your request, I have drawne out certaine abuses worth the noting, touching the worke you have in hand; things which I my selfe have seene within these xxvi yeares, among those which were counted famous and skillfull in those sciences. And bicause the whole discourse cannot be set downe, without nominating certaine persons, *of whom some are dead, and some living, whose freends remaine yet of great credit*: in respect thereof, I knowing that mine enimies doo already in number exceed my freends; I have considered with my selfe, that it is better for me to staie my hand, than to commit that to the world, which may increase my miserie more than relevee the same. Notwithstanding, bicause I am noted above a great many others to have had some dealings in those vaine arts and wicked practises; I am therefore to signifie unto you, and I speake it in the presence of God, that among all those famous and noted practisers, that I have been conversant with all these xxvi years, I could never see anie matter of truth, etc." He then, after exposing the futility of these studies, and lamenting his addiction to them, adds,—"For mine owne part, I have repented me five yeares past: at which time I sawe a booke, written in the old Saxon toong, by one Sir John Malborne, a divine of Oxenford, three hundred yeares past; wherein he openeth all the illusions and inventions of those arts and sciences: a thing most worthie the noting. I left the booke with the parson of Slangham, in Sussex, where if you send for it in my name, you may have it."

At the conclusion of this letter, which is dated the 8th of March, 1582, Scot says, as a further proof of the folly of the times,—

"I sent for this booke of purpose, to the parson of Slangham, and procured his best friends, men of great worship and credit, to deale with him, that I might borrowe it for a time. But such is his follie and superstition, that although he confessed he had it; yet he would not lend it; albeit a friend of mine, being knight of the shire, would have given his word for the restitution of the same safe and sound." *

The reception of James's work on Demonology, which is as copious on the arts of enchantment as on those of witchcraft, is itself a most striking instance of the gross credulity of his subjects; for, while the learned, the sensible, and humane treatise of Scot was either reprobated or neglected, the labours of this monarch in behalf of superstition were received with applause, and referred to with a deference which admitted not of question.

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, edit. of 1584.

Mason followed the footsteps of Scot, though not with equal ability, when in 1612 he endeavoured to throw ridicule upon "Inchanters and Charmers—they, which by using of certaine conceited words, characters, circles, amulets, and such like vaine and wicked trumpery (by God's permission) doe work great marvailes : as namely in causing of sicknesse, as also in curing diseases in men's bodies. And likewise binding some, that they cannot use their naturall powers and faculties ; as we see in Night-spells. Insomuch as some of them doe take in hand to bind the Divell himselfe by their enchantments."

Five years afterwards, Burton, who seems to have been a believer in the influence which the Devil was supposed to exert in cherishing the growth of Sorcery, records that Magic is "practised by some still, maintained and excused ;" and he adds, that "Nero and Heliogabalus, Maxentius, and Julianus Apostata, were never so much addicted to Magick of old, as some of our modern Princes and Popes themselves are now adayes." *

The Art of Magic had, during the reign of Elizabeth, assumed a more scientific appearance, from its union with the mystic reveries of the Cabalists and Rosicrusians, and, under this modification, has it been adopted by Shakspeare for the purposes of dramatic impression. Astrology, Alchemy, and what was termed Theurgy, or an intercourse with Divine Spirits, were combined with the more peculiar doctrines of Necromancy or the Black Art, and, under this form, was a system of mere delusions frequently mistaken for a branch of Natural Philosophy. Thus Fuller, speaking of Dr. John Dee, the Prince of Magicians in Shakspeare's days, says,—

"He was a most excellent Mathematician and Astrologer, well skilled in Magick, as the Antients did, the Lord Bacon doth, and all may accept the sence thereof, viz., in the lawfull knowledg of Naturall Philosophie. This exposed him, anno 1583, amongst his ignorant Neighbours, where he then liv'd, at Mortclack in Surrey, to the suspicion of a Conjuror : the cause I conceive, that his Library was then seized on, wherein were four thousand Books, and seven hundred of them Manuscripts." *

This singular character, who was born in 1527, and did not die until after the accession of James, was certainly possessed of much mathematical knowledge, having delivered lectures at Paris on the Elements of Euclid, with unprecedented applause ; but he was at the same time grossly superstitious and enthusiastic, not only dealing in nativities, talismans and charms, but pretending to a familiar intercourse with the world of spirits, of which Dr. Meric Casaubon has published a most extraordinary account, in a large folio volume, entitled, "A true and faithful relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee and some spirits," 1659 : and what is still more extraordinary, this learned editor tells us in his preface, that he "never gave more credit to any humane history of former times."

Dee, who had been educated at Cambridge, and was an excellent classical scholar, had, as might be supposed, in an age of almost boundless credulity, many patrons, and among these were the Lords Pembroke and Leicester, and even the Queen herself ; but, notwithstanding this splendid encouragement, and much private munificence, particularly from the female world, our astrologer, like most of his tribe, died miserably poor. His love of books has given him a niche in Mr. Dibdin's Bibliographical Romance, where, under the title of the renowned Dr. John Dee, he is introduced in the following animated manner :—

"Let us fancy we see him in his conjuring cap and robes—surrounded with astrological, mathematical, and geographical instruments—with a profusion of Chaldee characters inscribed upon vellum rolls—and with his celebrated Glass suspended by magical wires.—Let us then follow him into his study at midnight, and view him rummaging his books ; contemplating the heavens ; making calculations ; holding converse with invisible spirits ; writing down their responses : anon, looking into his correspondence with Count a Lasco, and the emperors Adolphus and

* Anatomie of Melancholy, p. 33.

† Worthies of England, Part II. p. 116.

Maximilian ; and pronouncing himself, with the most heartfelt complacency, the greatest genius of his age ! In the midst of these self-complacent reveries, let us imagine we see his wife and little ones intruding : beseeching him to burn his books and instruments ; and reminding him that there was neither a silver spoon, nor a loaf of bread in the cupboard. Alas, poor Dee !” *

We have some reason to conclude, from the history of his life, of which Hearne has given us a very copious account, † that Dee was more of an enthusiast than a knave ; but this cannot be predicated of his associate Kelly, who was assuredly a most impudent impostor.

“ He was born,” says Fuller, whose account of him is singularly curious, “ at Worcester, (as I have it from the Scheame of his Nativity, graved from the original calculation of Doctor Dee), Anno Domini 1555, August the first, at four o clock in the afternoon, the Pole being there elevated, gr. 52 10—He was well studied in the mysteries of nature, being intimate with Doctor Dee, who was beneath him in Chemistry, but above him in Mathematicks. These two are said to have found a very large quantity of *Elixir* in the ruins of Glassenbury Abby.

“ Afterwards (being here in some trouble) he (Kelly) went over beyond the seas, with Albertus Alasco, a Polonian Baron, who — it seems, sought to repair his fortunes by associating himself with these two Arch-chemists of England.

“ How long they continued together, is to me unknown. Sir Edward (though I know not how he came by his knight-hood) with the Doctor, fixed at Trebona in Bohemia, where he is said to have transmuted a brass ‡ warming-pan (without touching or melting, onely warming it by the fire, and putting the Elixir thereon) into pure silver, a piece whereof was sent to Queen Elizabeth.

“ They kept constant intelligence with a Messenger or Spirit, giving them advice how to proceed in their mysticall discoveries, and adjoining them, that, by way of preparatory qualification for the same, they should enjoy their wives in common.—

“ This probably might be the cause, why Doctor Dee left Kelley, and return’d into England. Kelley continuing still in Germany, ranted it in his expenses (say the Brethren of his own art)

* Dibdin's *Bibliomania*, p. 343—346. Mr. Dibdin has given us the following account of *Dee's Library*, “as drawn up by our philosopher himself.”

“400 *Volumes*—printed and unprinted—bound and unbound—valued at 2000 lib.

“1 Greek, 2 French, and 1 High Dutch, volumes of MSS., alone worth 533 lib. 40 years in getting these books together.

“Appertaining thereto :—*Sundry rare and exquisitely made Mathematical Instruments*. *A radius Astronomicus*, ten feet long. *A magnet stone, or Load stone* ; of great virtue—which was sold out of the library but for v shill. and for it afterwards '(ye piece-meal divided) was more than xx lib. given in money and value. *A great case or frame of boxes*, wherein some hundreds of very rare evidences of divers Irelandish territories, provinces, and lands, were therein notified to have been in the hands of some of the ancient Irish princes. Then, their submissions and tributes agreed upon, with seals appendant to the little writings thereof in parchment : and after by some of those evidences did it appear, how some of those lands came to the Lascies, the Mortuomars, the Burghs, the Clares, &c. *A Box of Evidences* antient of some Welch princes and noblemen—the like of Norman donation—their peculiar titles noted on the forepart with chalk only, which on the poor boxes remaineth. This box, with another containing similar deedes, were embezzled. *One great bladder* with about 4 pound weight, of a very sweetish thing, like a brownish gum in it, artificially prepared by thirty times purifying of it, hath more than I could well afford him for 100 crownes ; as may be proved by witnesses yet living.

“To these he adds his three *Laboratories*, ‘serving for Pyrotechnia,’—which he got together after twenty years labor. ‘All which furniture and provision, and many things already prepared, is unduly made away from me by sundry meanes, and a few spoiled or broken vessels remain, hardly worth 40 shillings.’ But one feature more in poor Dee’s character—and that is, his unparalleled serenity and good nature under the most griping misfortunes—remains to be described : and then we may take farewell of him with aching hearts.

“In the 40th chapter, speaking of the wretched poverty of himself and family (‘having not one penny of certain fee, revenue, stipend, or pension, either left him or restored unto him’)—Dee says that ‘he has been constrained now and then to send parcels of his little furniture of plate to pawn upon usury ; and that did he so oft till no more could be sent. After the same manner went his wife’s jewels of gold, rings, bracelets, chains, and other their rarities, under the thraldom of the usurer’s gripes :’ till *non plus* was written upon the boxes at home.

“In the 11th chapter, he anticipates the dreadful lot of being brought ‘to the stepping out of doors (his house being sold). He, and his, with bottles and wallets furnished, to become wanderers as homish vagabonds ; or, as banished men, to forsake the kingdom !’ Again : ‘with bloody tears of heart, he, and his wife, their seven children, and their servants, (seventeen of them in all) did that day make their petition unto their honors, &c. Can human misery be sharper than this—and to be the lot of a philosopher and bibliomaniac ? But VENIET FELICIUS ÆVUM.”—*Bibliomania*, p. 347—349.

† “In his edition of John Confrat. *Monach. de. rebus. gestis Glaston.*, vol. ii, where twelve chapters (from whence the above note is partly taken) are devoted to the subject of our philosopher’s travels and hardships.” *Bibliomania*, p. 343. note.

‡ Vide *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 481.

above the sobriety befitting so mysterious a Philosopher. He gave away in goldwyer rings, at the marriage of one of his Maid-servents, to the value of four thousand pounds.—

“Come we now to his sad catastrophe. Indeed, the curious had observed, that in the Scheme of his Nativity, not onely the Dragons-tail was ready to promote abusive aspersions against him (to which living and dead he hath been subject) but also something malignant appears posited in Aquarius, which hath influence on the leggs, which accordingly came to pass. For being twice imprisoned (for what misdemeanor I know not) by Radulphus the Emperor, he endeavoured to escape out of an high window, and tying his sheets together to let him down, fell (being a weighty man) and brake his legg, whereof he died, 1595.”*

It appears, however, from other sources, that the trouble to which Kelly was put, consisted in losing his ears on the pillory in Lancashire; that the credulity of the age had allotted him the post of descryer, or seer of visions to Dee, whom he accompanied to Germany, and that one of his offices, under this appointment, was to watch and report the gesticulations of the spirits whom his superior had fixed and compelled to appear in a talisman or stone, which very stone, we are informed, is now in the Strawberry-hill collection, and is nothing more than a finely polished mass of canal coal! His knighthood was the reward of a promise to assist the Emperor Rodolphus the Second, in his search after the phiosopher's stone; and the discovery of his deceptive practices led him to a prison, from which it is said Elizabeth, to whom a piece of the transmuted warming-pan had been sent, had tempted him to make that escape which terminated in his death.†

Such were the leaders of the cabalistic and alchemical Magi in the days of our Virgin Queen; men, in the estimation of the great bulk of the people, possessed of super-human power, and who, notwithstanding their ignorance and presumption, and the exposure of their art by some choice spirits of their own, and the immediately subsequent period, among whom Ben Jonson, as the author of the Alchemist, stands pre-eminent, continued for near a century to excite the curiosity, and delude the expectations of the public.‡

The delineation of Prospero, the noblest conception of the Magic character which ever entered the mind of a poet, is founded upon a distinction which was supposed to exist between the several professors of this mysterious science. They were separated, in fact, into two great orders; into those who commanded the service of superior intelligences, and into those who, by voluntary compact, entered into a league with, or submitted to be the instruments of these powers. Under the first were ranked Magicians, who were again classed into higher or inferior, according to the extent of the control which they exerted over the invisible world; the former possessing an authority over celestial, as well as infernal spirits. Under the second were included Necromancers and Wizards, who, for the enjoyment of temporary power, subjected themselves, like the Witch, to final perdition.

Of the highest class of the first order was Prospero, one of those Magicians or Conjurors who, as Reginald Scot observes, “professed the art which some sound divines affirmed to be more honest and lawful than necromancie, which is called Theurgie; wherein they worke by good angels.” § Accordingly, we find Prospero operating upon inferior agents, upon elves, demons, and goblins, through the medium of Ariel, a spirit too delicate and good to “act abhorr'd commands,” but who “answered his best pleasure,” and was subservient to his “strong bidding.”

Shakspeare has very properly given to the exterior of Prospero, several of the adjuncts and costume of the popular magician. Much virtue was inherent in his

* Worthies of England, P. III. p. 172.

† Vide Weaver's Funeral Monuments, p. 45, and Wood's Athenæ Oxon. vol. i. col. 279.

‡ In what estimation Kelly was held in 1662, is evident from the opinion of Fuller, who closes his account of this daring impostor with the following sentence:—“If his pride and prodigality were severed from him, he would remain a person, on other accounts, for his industry and experience in practical Philosophy, worthy recommendation to posterity.” Worthies, p. 174.

That Shakspeare was exempt from the astrological mania of his age, we learn from his fourteenth sonnet.

§ Discoverie of Witchcraft, book xv. chap. 42. p. 466.]

very garments; and Scot has, in many instances, particularised their fashion. A pyramidal cap, a robe furred with fox-skins, a girdle three inches in breadth, and inscribed with cabalistic characters, shoes of russet leather, and unscabbarded swords, formed the usual dress; but, on peculiar occasions, certain deviations were necessary; thus, in one instance, we are told the Magician must be habited in "clean white cloathes;" that his girdle must be made of "a drie thong of a lion's or of a hart's skin;" that he must have a "brest-plate of virgine parch-ment, sowed upon a piece of new linnen," and inscribed with certain figures; and likewise, "a bright knife that was never occupied," covered with characters on both sides, and with which he is to "make the circle, called Salomon's circle."

Our poet has, therefore, laid much stress on these seeming minutiae, and we find him, in the second scene of *The Tempest*, absolutely asserting, that the essence of the art existed in the robe of Prospero, who, addressing his daughter, says,—

—————"Lend thy hand,
And pluck my *magic garment* from me.—So ; (Lays down his mantle.
LIE THERE MY ART."

A similar importance is assigned to his staff or wand; for he tells Ferdinand,—

———"I can here disarm thee with this stick,
And make thy weapon drop :—" Act i. sc. 2.

and, when he abjures the practice of magic, one of the requisites is, to "break his staff," and to

"Bury it certain fathoms in the earth." Act v. sc. 1.

But the more immediate instruments of power were Books, through whose assistance spells and adjurations were usually performed. Reginald Scot, speaking of the traffickers in Magic of his time, says,—

"These conjurors carrie about at this daie, books intituled under the names of Adam, Abel, Tobie, and Enoch; which Enoch they repute the most divine fellow in such matters. They have also among them bookes that they saie Abraham, Aaron, and Salomon made. They have bookes of Zacharie, Paule, Honorius, Cyprian, Jerome, Jeremie, Albert, and Thomas: also of the angels, Riziel, Razael, and Raphael." *

Books are, consequently, represented as one of the chief sources of Prospero's influence over the spiritual world. He himself declares,—

—————"I'll to my *book*;
For yet, ere supper time, must I perform
Much business appertaining;" Act iii. sc. 1.

and, on relinquishing his art, he says, that

———"deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my *book*;" Act v. sc. 1.

whilst Caliban, conspiring against the life of his benefactor, tells Stephano, that, before he attempts to destroy him, he must

—————"Remember,
First to possess his *books*; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command." Act iii. sc. 2.

Though we perceive the effect of Prospero's spells, the mode by which they are wrought does not appear; we are only told that silence is necessary to their success:—

—————"Hush, and be mute,
Or else our spell is marr'd." Act iv. sc. 2.

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 451.

He afterwards assures us, that his “charms crack not,” and that his “spirits obey;” and, in one instance, he commissions Ariel to “untie the spell” in which he had bound Caliban and his companions.

It is probable that any attempt to represent the forms of adjuration and enchantment would have been either too ludicrous or too profane for the purposes of the poet. In the one instance, the mysterious solemnity of the scene would have been destroyed; and, in the other, the serious feelings of the spectator might have been shocked; at least, such are the results of the mind of the reader, in perusing the numerous specimens of adjuration in the fifteenth book of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. One of these, as including an example of the then fashionable mode of conjuration, that of fixing the spirit in a beryl, glass, or stone, according to the practice of Dee and Kelly, shall be given; omitting, however, all those invocations and addresses which, by a frequent use of names and phrases the most hallowed and sacred, must, on such occasions, prove alike indecorous and disgusting. The adjuration in question is termed by Scot, “an experiment of the dead,” or, “conjuring for a dead spirit:” it commences in the following manner, and terminates in obtaining the services of a good and beautiful spirit of the fairy tribe; and such we may suppose to have been the process through which Prospero procured the obedience and ministration of Ariel, for we are expressly told, that “graves” at his “command”

“Have waked their sleepers; oped and let them forth.”

“First fast and praie three daies, and absteine thee from all filthinesse; go to one that is new buried, such a one as killed himselfe, or destroyed himself wilfullie: or else get thee promise of one that shall be hanged, and let him sweare an oth to thee, after his bodie is dead, that his spirit shall come to thee, and doe thee true service, at thy commandements, in all daies, houres, and minutes. And let no persons see thy doings, but thy fellow. And about eleven o clocke in the night, go to the place where he was buried, and saie with a bold faith and hartie desire, to have the spirit come that thou dost call for, thy fellow having a candle in his left hand, and in his right hand a christall stone, and saie these words following, the maister having a hazell wand in his right hand, and these names—written thereupon, Tetragrammaton + Adonay + Craton. Then strike three strokes on the ground, and saie, Arise, Arise, Arise!—

“The maister standing at the head of the grave, his fellow having in his hands the candle and the stone, must begin the conjuration as followeth, and the spirit will appeare to you in the christall stone, in a faire forme of a child of twelve yeares of age. And when he is in, feele the stone, and it will be hot; and feare nothing, for he or shee will shew manie delusions, to drive you from your worke. Feare God, but feare him not.”

Then follows a long conjuration to constrain the appearance of the spirit, which being effected, another is pronounced to compel him to fetch the “fairie Sibylia.”

“This done, go to a place fast by, and in a faire parlor or chamber, make a circle with chalke;—aud make another circle for the fairie Sibylia to appeare in, soure foote from the circle thou art in, and make no names therein, nor cast anie holie thing therein, but make a circle round with chalke; and let the maister and his fellowe sit downe in the first circle, the maister having the booke in his hand, his fellow having the christall stone in his right hand, looking in the stone when the fairie dooth appeare.”

The fairie Sibylia is then seventimes cited to appear:—“I conjure thee Sibylia, O gentle virgine of fairies, by all the angels of ♂ and their characters and vertues, and by all the spirits of ♀ and ♀ and their characters and vertues, and by all the characters that be in the firmament, and by the king and queene of fairies, and their vertues, and by the faith and obedience which thou bearest unto them,—I conjure thee, O blessed and beautifull virgine, by all the riall words aforesaid; I conjure thee Sibylia, by all their vertues to appeare in that circle before me visible, in the forme and shape of a beautifull woman in a bright and white vesture, adorned and garnished most faire, and to appeare to me quicklie without deceit or tarrieng, and that thou faile not to fulfill my will and desire effectuallie.”

The spirit in the christall stone having produced Sibylia within the circle, she is bound to appear “at all times visiblie, as the conjuration of words leadeth, written in the booke,” and the ceremony is wound up in the subsequent terms:—“I conjure thee Sibylia, O blessed virgine of fairies, by the king and queene of fairies, and by their vertues,—to give me good counsell at

all times, and to come by treasures hidden in the earth, and all other things that is to doo me pleasure, and to fulfill my will, without any deceit or tarrieng; nor yet that thou shalt have anie power of my bodie or soule, earthlie or ghostlie, not yet to perish so much of my bodie as one haire of my head. I conjure thee Sibyllia by all the riall words aforesaid, and by their vertues and powers, I charge and bind thee by the vertue thereof, to be obedient unto me, and to all the words aforesaid, and this bond to stand betweene thee and me, upon paine of everlasting condemnation, *Fiat, fiat, fiat.* Amen.*

The Sibyllia of this incantation was, therefore, in origin, form, manners, and potency, very much assimilated to the Ariel of our author's *Tempest*, being gentle, beautiful, yet possessing great influence, and exerting high authority over numerous inferior essences and powers. Thus the spirits employed by Prospero were subservient to Ariel, and under his immediate direction, partly by his own rank in the hierarchy of elemental existences, and partly by the aid of Prospero.†

The orders of spirits constituting the miraculous machinery of *The Tempest* are in *Hamlet* ranged under four heads,

————— “In sea or fire, in earth or air,” —

a distribution which, though seeming naturally to spring from the usual nomenclature of the elements, was not the division generally adopted; for Scot, detailing the opinion of Psellus “*De Operatione Demonum*,” classes the elementary spirits under six heads, by the addition of subterranean spirits and spirits of darkness, “*subterranei et lucifugi*,” and the Talmudists and Platonists add to these, solar, lunar, and stellar spirits; but our poet was probably influenced in his enumeration, by the perusal of Batman uppon Bartholome, who tells us, in a manner calculated to make an impression on the mind, that “spirites are divided one from another, that some are called firie, some earthly, some airie, some watrie. Heereupon those foure rivers in Hell are sayd to be of divers natures, to wit, Phlegethon firie, Cocytus airie, Styx watrye, Acheron earthly.”‡ We are the more inclined to believe this to have been the case, notwithstanding the obvious facility of such a classification, because it appears to us, that in a prior part of this book, the germ of Caliban's generation may be detected.

“Incubus,” observes this commentator on Bartholome, “doth infest and trouble women, and Succubus doth infest men, by the which wordes (taken from Augustine “*De Civitate Dei*”) it is manifest, that the godly, chast, and honest minded, are not free from this gross subjection, although more commonly the dishonest are molested therewith. Some hold opinion, that Marline in the time of Vortigern king of great Britaine 470 yeres before Christ, was borne after this manner. Hieronimus Cardanus in his tretise *De rebus contra naturam*, seemes to be of opinion that spirits or divells may beget and conceive but not after y^e common manner, yet he reciteth a storie of a young damoisell of Scotland which was got with child of an inchaunted divell, thinking that he had bene a fayre young man which had layen with hir, whereupon she brought forth so deformed a monster, that he feared the beholders.” He then proceeds to observe, that the spirits thus procreating are not of a “subtill Materia,” “but a more grose and earthie cause, as Nymphæ, Dryades, Hobgoblins, and Fairies,” adding, that two instances of such connection, “it is no straunge secret to disclose,” had taken place “in fewe yeares heere in Englande.”§

We find Prospero, in fact, employing these four classes of spirits in succession, but in every instance, through the immediate or remote agency of Ariel. Those of fire are thus described:—

* Discoverie of Witchcraft, p. 401, 402, 404—407.

† “Go,” says Prospero, addressing Ariel,

————— “Go, bring the rabble,
O'er whom I give thee power, here, to this place.”

Act iv. sc. 1.

‡ “Batman uppon Bartholome, His Booke, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*,” &c. folio, 1582, p. 168. col. 4.—He tells us, however, in another place, that “in the region of the sunne, the spirits of the sunne are of more force than the rest. In the region of the moone, those spirites of the moone, and so of the residue.” P. 170, col. 4.

§ Batman uppon Bartholome, p. 84. col. 3, 4.

————— “ Now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flam’d amazement : Sometimes, I’d divide,” &c. Act i. sc. 2.

The spirits of the water are divided into sea-nymphs, or elves of brooks and standing lakes. Under the first of these characters they are most exquisitely introduced as solacing Ferdinand, after the terrors of his shipwreck:—

“ Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands :
Court’sied when you have, and kiss’d,
(The wild waves whist,)
Foot it featly here and there ;
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.”

Nothing, indeed, can be more appropriately wild than the imagery of the ensuing song, which arrests the ear of Ferdinand whilst he is uttering his astonishment at the previous melody:—

“ Full fathom five thy father lies ;
Of his bones are coral made ;
Those are pearls that were his eyes :
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell :
Hark ! now I hear them,—ding—dong, bell. *

Well may Ferdinand exclaim, “ This is no mortal business ! ”

The spirits of earth, or goblins, were usually employed by Prospero as instruments of punishment. Thus Caliban, apprehensive of chastisement for bringing in his wood too slowly, gives us a fearful detail of their inflictions:—

————— “ His spirits hear me—
For every trifle are they set upon me :
Sometime like apes, that mope and chatter at me,
And after bite me ; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my bare-foot way, and mount
Their pricks at my foot-fall : sometime am I
All wound with adders, who, with cloven tongues,
Do hiss me into madness.” Act ii. sc. 2.

They are afterwards commissioned, in the shape of hounds, to hunt this hag-born monster, and his friends Trinculo and Stephano, Prospero telling Ariel,—

“ Go, charge *my goblins* that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions ; shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps ; and more pinch-spotted make them,
Than pard, or cat o’ mountain.” Act iv. sc. 1.

Lastly, the spirits of *air*, as being of a more delicate and refined nature, are appointed by our magician to personate, under the direction of Ariel, a “ most majestic vision ; ” “ spirits,” says their great task-master,

————— “ which by mine art
I have from their confines call’d to enact
My present fancies ; ” Act iv. sc. 1.

and which, on the fading of this “ unsubstantial pageant,” melt “ into air, into thin air.”

It appears, also, that these ethereal forms were occupied night and day in chanting the most delicious melodies, or in suggesting the most delightful dreams. The isle, says Caliban,

————— “ is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.” &c.—Act iii. sc. 2.

* Act i. sc. 2.—This song has been admirably imitated by Kirke White in the opening of his fine fragment, entitled “ The Dance of the Consumptives.”—Vol. i. p. 295. 1st edit.

But of the filmy texture, the tiny dimensions, and fairy recreations of these elegant beings, we have the most exquisite description in the song which the poet puts into the mouth of Ariel on the prospect of his approaching freedom:—

“ Where the bee sucks, there suck I ;
In a cowslip’s bell I lie :
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat’s back I do fly,
After summer mer rily :
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.” Act v. sc. 1.

That all these elementary spirits were agents only on compulsion, and their obedience the result solely of magic power, is evident from the conduct of Ariel, and the language of Caliban ; the former repeatedly asking for liberty, and the latter declaring, that “ they all do hate him, as rootedly as I.”

It is equally clear, from various parts of this play, that each class had a period prescribed for its operations : thus Prospero threatens Caliban, that

“ urchins
Shall for that *vast of night that may work*,
All exercise on thee ;” Act i. sc. 2.

and, in invoking the various elves, he speaks of those

“ that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew ;” Act v. sc. 1.

a doctrine which is still more minutely expressed in other dramas of our poet. In Hamlet, for instance, we are told that, at “ the crowing of the cock,”

“ The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine ;” Act i. sc. 1.

and in King Lear, that the foul “ fiend Flibbertigibbet begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock.” Act iii. sc. 4.

One principal reason for the reluctancy expressed by Ariel and his associates was, that they were driven, by the irresistible control of the magician, to perform deeds often alien to their dispositions, and to which, if left to themselves, they were either partially or totally inadequate, and, indeed, for the most part utterly averse. We accordingly find Prospero, in his celebrated invocation to these various ministers of his art, addressing them in a tone of high authority ; “ by ‘ your’ aid,” he exclaims,

“ (Weak masters though ye be) I have be-dimm’d
The noon-tide sun, call’d forth the mutinous winds,” &c. Act v. sc. 1.

This is a passage, in which, with its immediately preceding context, Shakspeare has been indebted, as Dr. Farmer observes, to Golding’s translation of the Medea of Ovid ; having evidently, in many parts, adopted the very language of that version. But it is also strictly conformable to the powers with which the magicians of his own day were invested.

“ These,” says Scot, “ deale with no inferior causes : these fetch divels out of hell, and angels out of heaven ; these raise up what bodies they list, though they were dead, buried, and rotten long before ; and fetch soules out of heaven or hell.—These, I saie, take upon them also the raising of tempests, and earthquakes, and to doo as much as God himselve can doo. These are no small fooles, they go not to worke with a baggage tode, or a cat, as witches doo ; but with a kind of majestie, and with authoritie they call up by name, and have at their commandment—divells, who have under them, as their ministers, a great multitude of legions of petty divels.” P. 377.

We may finally remark, that over the popular creed relative to the Art of Magic, and which, as detailed in the common books and traditions on the sub—

ject, presents us with little but what is either ridiculous or revolting, Shakspeare has exerted a species of enchantment which infinitely surpasses that of the most profound Magi of classic or of Gothic lore; eliciting from materials equally crude, gigantic, and extravagant, the elements of beauty, sublimity, and awful wonder; and unfolding such a picture of what may be conceived within the reach of human skill and science, and so much of the philosophy of poetry in his glimpses of the spiritual world, that while we are spell-struck by the creations of a fancy beyond all others glowing and romantic, we yet feel ourselves in the presence, and bow before the throne of Nature.

34. OTHELLO: 1612. Mr. Malone has assigned the composition of this play to the year 1611, though, as he confesses, with little satisfaction to himself, in consequence of Dr. Warburton having considered the following passage, in the third act of this play, as an allusion to the institution of the order of Baronets, created by James the First, in 1611:—

————— “the hearts of old gave hands,
But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.”

The baronets, remarks Warburton, “had an addition to their paternal arms, of a hand gules in an escutcheon argent. And we are not to doubt but that this was the new heraldry alluded to by our author.”

That the text contains a sly allusion to the new heraldry of hands in the baronet's arms, there cannot, as Mr. Douce has justly observed, be a doubt;* but, unfortunately for Mr. Malone's chronology, Dr. Warburton was mistaken as to the *period* of the grant of arms, Mr. Chalmers having clearly proved, that “the additional armorial bearing, of the bloody hand, was not given by the patent of creation.—But the King, wishing to amplify his favour towards the baronets, granted them, by a second patent, dated the 28th of May, 1612, among other pre-eminences, ‘the arms of Ulster, that is, in a field argent, a hand geules, or a bloudie hand.’”†

Now, as we have it recorded, on the authority of Mr. Vertue's MS., that Othello was acted at court early in the year 1613, it might have been imagined that Mr. Chalmers's discovery would have led him to the adoption of the epoch which we have chosen. But, strange as it may appear, this is not the case; for, finding Iago, in the subsequent act, remarking to Othello, in reference to Desdemona, “If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend,” he immediately disputes the testimony of Vertue, which had been allowed in every other instance, and because a clamour had occurred in the House of Commons against patents of monopoly, in May, 1614, places Othello in this very year, when, but three pages before, he had spoken of “the audience” knowing “from their feelings, how much vexation had arisen from the patents of monopoly, which Queen Elizabeth and King James had so frequently granted;” and referring, in a note, to a declaration of Sir Francis Bacon to the House of Commons, in which he tells them, “if you make a penal statute, the Queen will dispense with it, and grant a patent with a non obstante.”

Convinced that an allusion so indeterminate, and which might have been as much relished by an audience before, as after, the year 1614, ought not to weigh against a positive and respectable testimony, we feel no hesitation in expressing our belief that Othello was written in the interval elapsing between the 28th of May, 1612, and the 1st of January, 1613.

The tragedy of Othello, certainly one of the first-rate productions of its author, is yet, in our opinion, inferior, in point of originality and poetic wealth, to Macbeth, to Lear, to Hamlet, and The Tempest, though superior, perhaps, to every other play. It is, without doubt, an unrivalled representation of the passion of jealousy, in all its stages and effects; but the incidents, if we except the catastrophe, are pretty closely copied from the novel of “Giraldi Cinthio,” who, as Mr.

* Illustrations of Shakspeare, vol. ii. p. 270.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 460.

Steevens has observed, "supplied our author with a regular and circumstantial outline." It has also been remarked by Mr. Dunlop, and with some truth, that "the characters of Iago, Desdemona, and Cassio, are taken from Cinthio with scarcely a shade of difference;" a declaration, however, which, with respect to Desdemona, cannot be admitted without great qualification; for with what beauty, with what pathetic impressiveness, is her part filled up, when compared with the sketch of the Italian novelist! We must also recollect, that although the incidents in which Othello is concerned be nearly the same in both productions, the character of the Moor has no prototype in Cinthio, but is exclusively the property of Shakspeare.

But the most extraordinary criticism which was probably ever passed on the general cast and execution of Othello, has fallen from the pen of Mr. Steevens. "Should readers," says this gentleman, "who are alike conversant with the appropriate excellencies of poetry and painting, pronounce on the reciprocal merits of these great productions (Othello and Macbeth), I must suppose they would describe them as of different pedigrees. They would add, that one was of the school of Raphael, the other from that of Michael Angelo; and that if the steady Sophocles and Virgil should have decided in favour of Othello, the remonstrances of the daring Æschylus and Homer would have claimed laurel for Macbeth."

That Othello, being more regular in the construction of its fable than Macbeth, might, on that account, be preferred by Sophocles and Virgil, will readily be granted; but that it has, in its general style of composition, any pretensions to be classed as a production of the school of Raffaello, the leading features of which, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds, are, in conception, beauty, dignity, and grace, and in execution, correctness of drawing and purity of taste, is an imagination alike extravagant and unfounded. Were we disposed to carry on the allusion to the art of painting, it might be said with a much greater approximation to truth, that this very impressive drama was designed in the school of Spagnuololetto, and tinted in that of Rembrandt; the dark strong manner of the former, and the bold pencil and distinct colouring of the latter, being infinitely more analogous to the strength of its characterisation, and the forcible and often contrasted tone of its composition.

What, for instance, can be more opposed in structure, or contrasted in manner, more partaking of the rapid transition of light and shade which distinguish the school of Rembrandt, than the characters of Othello and Desdemona. From the one we involuntarily retire, appalled by the storm of vindictive passion which agitates his breast; while the other, all tenderness, gentleness, and humility, is entwined about our hearts by the most fascinating ties of simplicity and spotless purity. The prevailing tone of the picture is, nevertheless, gloomy and terrific in the extreme, and the denouement such, as not even Spagnuololetto, though remarkable for the direful nature of his subjects, has ever exceeded.

We must acknowledge, however, that there is a grandeur and sublimity in the delineation of Othello, of which the painter just mentioned had no conception; for though in his jealousy he is sensual and ferocious, apart from this horrid phrenzy which burns within him quenchless as the fervors of his native climate, he exhibits many of the noblest virtues of humanity, being open, magnanimous, and brave, confiding, grateful, and affectionate; and, considering the subtlety with which his suspicions are fostered and inflamed, he becomes at length, from the intensity of his sufferings, an object both of pity and admiration.

Iago, the artful instrument of his ruin, the most cool and malignant villain which the annals of iniquity have ever recorded, would, from the detestation which accompanies his every action, be utterly insupportable in the representation, were it not for the talents, for the skill and knowledge in the springs and principles of human thought and feeling, which he constantly displays, and which, fortunately for the moral of the scene, while they excite and keep alive an eager interest and curiosity, shield him not from our abhorrence and condemnation.

Amid this whirlwind and commotion of hatred and revenge, the modest, the artless, the unsuspecting Desdemona, seems, in the soothing but transient influence which she exerts, like an evening star, that beams lovely, for a moment, on the dark heavings of the tempest, and then is lost for ever!

35. **TWELFTH NIGHT: 1613.** When Mr. Malone adopted the following passage, on the suggestion of Mr. Tyrwhitt, as a sufficient basis for the assignment of this play to the year 1614, he appears to have been easily and egregiously misled. Antonio, addressing Sir Toby Belch, says, —

“ If this young gentleman
Have done offence, *I take the fault on me!* ”

to which the knight replies:—“ Nay, if you be an undertaker, I am for you (Act iii. sc. 4); ” a retort which Mr. Tyrwhitt imagined to contain an allusion to some persons who in 1614, “ had undertaken, through their influence in the House of Commons, to carry things according to His Majesty’s wishes ; ” and who, in consequence of this conduct, were stigmatised with the invidious name of undertakers. But we find, from a reference to the Journals of the House of Commons, that the terms Takers and Undertakers had been frequently used in King James’s parliaments, anteriorly to 1614, and Mr. Ritson pertinently observes, that “ Undertakers were persons employed by the King’s purveyors to take up provisions for the royal household, and were no doubt exceedingly odious ; ” so that an allusion to this epithet, in a *political* sense, if one were here intended, could not serve to appropriate the date of 1614. This being the case, there can be no hesitation in adopting the opinion of Ritson and Mason, who conceive Sir Toby intended a mere quibble on the word, of which the simple meaning is, that of one man taking upon himself the quarrel of another.

Having set aside, therefore, any chronological inference from this source, let us turn to Mr. Chalmers, who seems to have determined the date of this drama on better grounds. Yet of the three intimations on which he has formed his conclusion, the first, derived from a supposed reference to the British Undertakers for the plantation of Ulster, we believe to be entitled to as little credit as the kindred hypothesis of Mr. Malone. The second, which is founded on the evident intention of our poet to place in a ludicrous light the then very fashionable rage for duelling, is exclusively his own, and carries with it no inconsiderable weight.

“ In Twelfth Night,” he remarks, “ Shakspeare tried to effect, by ridicule, what the state was unable to perform by legislation. The duels, which were so incorrigibly frequent in that age, were thrown into a ridiculous light by the affair between Viola and Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. Sir Francis Bacon had lamented, in the House of Commons, on the 3d of March, 1609-10, the great difficulty of redressing the evil of duels, owing to the corruption of man’s nature.* King James tried to effect what the Parliament had despaired of effecting; and, in 1613, he issued ‘ An Edict and Censure against Private Combats,’† which was conceived with great vigour, and expressed with decisive force; but, whether with the help of Bacon, or not, I am unable to ascertain. This is another remarkable event in 1613, which the commentators have overlooked, though it may have caught Shakspeare’s eye.”‡

The third, common to both chronologers, but which has only received its due influence, in the chronological scale, from the statement of Mr. Chalmers, turns on the declaration of Fabian to Sir Toby, that he would not give his part of the sport, alluding to the plot against Malvolio, “ for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy (act iii. sc. 4); ” and on the assertion of Sir Toby to Sir Andrew Aguecheek, that Viola had been “ fencer to the Sophy.” (Act iii. sc. 4.) Now it appears from Mr. Chalmers, that “ in 1613, Sir Anthony Shirley published his travels into Persia; with his dangers and distresses, and his strange and unexpected deliverances; ” that “ Sir Robert Shirley, the brother of Sir Anthony, arrived in October, 1611, as Ambassador from the Sophy; bringing with him a

* Howe’s Chronicle, 1004.

† Supplemental Apology, p. 443, 444.

‡ It was printed by Barker, the King’s Printer, the same year.

Persian Princess, as his wife;" that "he remained here, through the whole of the year 1612, at an expense to King James of four pounds a day," and that "he departed in January, 1613."

These intimations induced Mr. Chalmers to infer, "that Twelfth Night was written in 1613, while these various objects were in the eye, or in the recollection of the public;" a conclusion which we see no reason to dispute.

The dramatic career of our immortal poet could not be closed with a production, in its kind, more exquisitely finished, than the comedy of Twelfth Night. The serious and the humorous scenes are alike excellent; the former

—————"give a very echo to the seat
Where love is thron'd,"

Act ii. sc. 4.

and are tinted with those romantic hues, which impart to passion the fascinations of fancy, and which stamp the poetry of Shakspeare with a character so transcendently his own, so sweetly wild, so tenderly imaginative. Of this description are the loves of Viola and Orsino, which, though involving a few improbabilities of incident, are told in a manner so true to nature, and in a strain of such melancholy enthusiasm, as instantly put to flight all petty objections, and leave the mind rapt in a dream of the most delicious sadness. The fourth scene of the second act more particularly breathes the blended emotions of love, of hope, and of despair, opening with a highly interesting description of the soothing effects of music, in allaying the pangs of unrequited affection, and in which the attachment of Shakspeare to the simple melodies of the olden time is strongly and beautifully expressed.

From the same source which has given birth to this delightful portion of the drama, appears to spring a large share of that rich and frolic humour which distinguishes its gayer incidents. The delusion of Malvolio, in supposing himself the object of Olivia's desires, and the ludicrous pretensions of Sir Andrew Aguecheek to the same lady, fostered as they are by the comic manœuvres of the convivial Sir Toby, and the keen-witted Maria, furnish, together with the professional drollery of Feste the jester, an ever-varying fund of pleasantry and mirth; scenes in which wit and raillery are finely blended with touches of original character, and strokes of poignant satire.

To these thirty-five genuine plays,* as they may be termed, a large number,

* Of these, twenty were published in 4to (including Pericles, and omitting Titus Andronicus), and the rest in the first folio, 1623. On this, the earliest complete collection of our author's plays, Mr. Steevens has given us, with the wit and humour which so peculiarly distinguished him, the following interesting *jeu d'esprit* :—

"Of all volumes, those of popular entertainment are soonest injured. It would be difficult to name four folios that are oftener found in dirty and mutilated condition, than this first assemblage of Shakspeare's plays—God's Revenge against Murder—The Gentleman's Recreation—and Johnson's Lives of the Highwaymen.

"Though Shakspeare was not, like Fox the Martyrologist, deposited in churches, to be thumbed by the congregation, he generally took post on our hall tables; and that a multitude of his pages have 'their effect of gravity,' may be imputed to the various eatables set out every morning on the same boards. It should seem that most of his readers were so chary of their time, that (like Pistol, who gnaws his leek and swears all the while) they fed and studied at the same instant. I have repeatedly met with thin flakes of pie-crust between the leaves of our author. These unctuous fragments, remaining long in close confinement, communicated their grease to several pages deep on each side of them.—It is easy enough to conceive how such accidents might happen;—how aunt Bridget's mastication might be disordered at the sudden entry of the Ghost into the Queen's closet, and how the half-chewed morsel dropped out of the gaping Squire's mouth, when the visionary Banquo seated himself in the chair of Macbeth. Still, it is no small eulogium on Shakspeare, that his claims were more forcible than those of hunger.—Most of the first folios now extant, are known to have belonged to ancient families resident in the country.

"Since our breakfasts have become less gross, our favourite authors have escaped with fewer injuries; not that (as a very nice friend of mine observes) those who read with a coffee-cup in their hands, are to be numbered among the contributors to bibliothecal purity.

"I claim the merit of being the first commentator on Shakspeare who strove, with becoming seriousness, to account for the frequent stains that disgrace the earliest folio edition of his plays, which is now become the most expensive single book in our language; for what other English volume without plates, and printed since the year 1600, is known to have sold, more than once, for thirty-five pounds fourteen shillings?"

Since this note was written, a copy of the first folio has produced the enormous price of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS. See Roxburghe Catalogue, p. 112. No. 3786.

when we consider that the life of their author extended very little beyond half a century, interest and unauthorised rumour have added a long list of spurious productions. Among these, we have assigned our reasons for placing what has been commonly called the First Part of King Henry the Sixth, but which, in Henslowe's catalogue of plays performed at the Rose theatre, is simply designated by the title of Henry the Sixth. In the same catalogue, also, is to be found Titus Andronicus, which, though printed like Henry in the first folio, has, if possible, still fewer pretensions to authenticity, having been clearly ascertained by the commentators, both from external and internal evidence, to possess no claim to such distinction, and to hold no affinity with the undisputed works of Shakspeare.

In a new edition of the Supplement, therefore, which Mr. Malone published in 1780, it is our recommendation that these two pieces be inserted, as proper companions for Locrine, Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cromwell, The London Prodigal, The Puritan, and A Yorkshire Tragedy. Of these wretched dramas, it has been now positively proved, through the medium of the Henslowe Papers, "that the name of Shakspeare, which is printed at length in the title-pages of Sir John Oldcastle, 1600, and The London Prodigal, 1605, was affixed to those pieces by a knavish bookseller, without any foundation," the following entry occurring in the manuscript, on the 16th of October, 1599:—"Received by me Thomas Downton, of Philip Henslowe, to pay Mr. Monday, Mr. Drayton, Mr. Wilson, and Hathway, for "The first part of the Lyfe of Sir Jhon Ouldcastell," and in earnest of "the Second Pte," for the use of the company, ten pound, I say received 10lb."

Not content with this ample addition, which first appeared in the folio of 1664, the public has been further imposed upon by another illegitimate group, principally derived from a blind confidence in the accuracy of catalogues and the fabrication of booksellers. From these sources, and from the authority of a volume formerly in the possession of King Charles the Second, and lettered on the back, SHAKSPEARE, Vol. I., the subsequent enumeration has been given by Mr. Steevens, viz.:—1. The Arraignment of Paris; 2. The Birth of Merlin; 3. Edward III.; 4. Fair Emm; 5. The Merry Devil of Edmonton; and 6. Mucedorus; to which may be added, from Warburton's Collection of Old Dramas, where they are said to have been entered on the books of the Stationers' Company as written by Shakspeare. 7. Duke Humphrey, a Tragedy; and 8. The History of King Stephen, both registered, June 29, 1660.* George Peele, it appears, was the author of The Arraignment of Paris, and a writer, who signs himself T. B., of The Merry Devil of Edmonton, while the ascription of the plays, once in Warburton's library, was probably owing, at that distance of time, either to the ignorance, credulity, or fraud, of some heedless or mercenary trader.

To enter into any critical discussion of the merits or defects of these pieces, would be an utter abuse of time. We do not believe that, either in the play of Henry the Sixth, or Titus Andronicus, twenty lines can be found of Shakspeare's composition; and, in the residue of this first group, consisting of six more, we decidedly think not so many. In the second, including also eight dramas, the only production now extant, of any worth, is The Merry Devil of Edmonton, which contains a few pleasing and interesting passages expressed with ease and simplicity.

We have still to notice some vague reports relative to our poet's occasional junction with his contemporaries in dramatic composition: thus, we are told, that he assisted Ben Jonson in his † Sejanus; Davenport, in his Henry the First,‡ and Fletcher, in his Two Noble Kinsmen.§ Of these traditional stories, the first has been very deservedly given up, as "entirely out of the question;"**

* See Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219.

† Capell's School of Shakspeare, vol. iii. p. 479. See also Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i. p. lxx.

‡ Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219.

§ On the authority of the title of the first quarto, printed in 1634, eighteen years after the death of Shakspeare.

** For proof of this, see Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. p. lxx. note.

the second rests merely on the unsupported assertion of a Stationers' Register, * and the third, though more express and distinct, has been completely refuted by Colman and Steevens. † Indeed, there is much reason to suppose that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was not written until after the death of Shakspeare. ‡

From what has been said, under each article of the preceding chronology, perhaps no very inadequate idea may be formed of the Dramatic Character of our poet; but, it will be expected here, and it is indeed essential to a just and facile comprehension of the subject, that a summary or condensed view of this character be attempted, in order, by collecting the scattered rays into a focus, to throw upon it a due degree of brilliancy and strength.

With the view of ascertaining the peculiar Genius of his Drama, it is necessary that we should attend to a distinction, which has been very correctly and luminously laid down by some late German critics, particularly by Herder and Schlegel, who oppose the modern to the ancient drama, under the appellation of the Gothic or romantic, assimilating the antique or classical theatre to a group in sculpture, and the Gothic or romantic to an extensive picture, separation being the essence of the former, and combination of the latter; or, in other words, that the spirit of the Grecian drama is plastic, and that of the English picturesque.

In fact, the Romantic Drama is the result of that great change which took place in society on the extinction of the western empire, when the blended influence of Christianity and Chivalry, operating on the stern virtues of the Teutonic tribes, gave birth to a spirit of seriousness and sentiment, of love and honour, of enterprise and adventure, which led to a constant aspiration after the great, the wonderful, the wild, and, by mingling the melancholy of a sublime religion with an enthusiastic homage for female worth, threw an anxious but unparalleled interest over all the relations of existence, and all the products of intellectual effort.

The effect of this combination on the poetry of the middle ages, and more especially on that of the immediately subsequent centuries, in impressing it with an awful and mysterious character, has been beautifully sketched by Schlegel, particularly where, as in the following passage, he accounts for the solemn and contemplative cast of its structure, by tracing its dependency on the genius of our faith.

“Among the Greeks,” he observes, “human nature was in itself all-sufficient; they were conscious of no wants, and aspired at no higher perfection than that which they could actually attain by the exercise of their own faculties. We, however, are taught by superior wisdom that man, through a high offence, forfeited the place for which he was originally destined; and that the whole object of his earthly existence is to strive to regain that situation, which, if left to his own strength, he could never accomplish. The religion of the senses had only in view the possession of outward and perishable blessings; and immortality, in so far as it was believed, appeared in an obscure distance like a shadow, a faint dream of this bright and vivid futurity. The very reverse of all this is the case with the Christian; every thing finite and mortal is lost in the contemplation of infinity; life has become shadow and darkness, and the first dawning of our real existence opens in the world beyond the grave. Such a religion must waken the foreboding, which slumbers in every feeling heart, to the most thorough consciousness, that the happiness after which we strive we can never here attain; that no external object can ever entirely fill our souls; and that every mortal enjoyment is but a fleeting and momentary deception. When the soul, resting as it were under the willows of exile, breathes out its longing for its distant home, the prevailing character of its songs must be melancholy. Hence the poetry of the ancients was the poetry of enjoyment, and ours is that of desire: the former has its foundation in the scene which is present, while the latter hovers betwixt recollection and hope. Let me not be understood

* See *Gent. Magazine*, vol. lxxxv. p. 219, and *Biographia Dramatica*, 1782, vol. i. p. 118, article *Davenport*.

† Colman's *Beaumont and Fletcher*, vol. i. p. 118.

‡ “*The Two Noble Kinsmen*,” observes Steevens, “could not have been composed till after 1611, nor perhaps antecedent to the deaths of Beaumont and our author, when assistance and composition ceased, and the poet, who resembled the latter most, had the fairest prospect of success. During the life of Beaumont, which concluded in 1615, it cannot well be supposed that Fletcher would have deserted him, to write in concert with any other dramatist. Shakspeare survived Beaumont only by one year, and, during that time, is known to have lived in Warwickshire, beyond the reach of Fletcher, who continued to reside in London till he fell a sacrifice to the plague in 1625.”

to affirm that every thing flows in one strain of wailing and complaint, and that the voice of melancholy must always be loudly heard. As the austerity of tragedy was not incompatible with the joyous views of the Greeks, so the romantic poetry can assume every tone, even that of the most lively gladness; but still it will always, in some shape or other, bear traces of the source from which it originated. The feeling of the moderns is, upon the whole, more intense, their fancy more incorporeal, and their thoughts more contemplative." *

Who does not perceive that this reference to futurity, this apprehension of the possible consequences of death, which chills the blood with awful emotion, and mingles fear even with the energies of hope, is peculiarly characteristic of the serious drama of Shakspeare? In what poet, for instance, shall we find the terrors of dissolution painted with such appalling strength? where nature recoiling with such involuntary horror from the thoughts of extinction? and where those blended feelings which, on the eve of our departure, even agitate the good, ere the forms of earthly love sink into night, and a world unknown receives the disembodied spirit? Need we point to Henry the Sixth, to Hamlet, to Measure for Measure, to Macbeth, and to many others, for proofs of this continual appeal to life beyond the grave, this perpetual effort to unite, with influential power, these two states of our existence, certainly one of the most striking distinctions which separate the romantic from the antique style of dramatic fiction, and in which, as in every other feature of this species of poetry, Shakspeare was the first who, in our own or any other country, exhibited such unrivalled excellence, as to constitute him, in every just sense of the term, the founder of this species of the drama.

For have we not, in his productions, the noblest model of that comprehensive form which, including under one view all the varieties and vicissitudes of human being, presents us with a picture in which not only the virtues and the vices, but the follies and the frailties, the levities and the mirth of man, are harmonised and blended into a perfect whole, connected too, and that intimately, with a vast range of surrounding circumstances which, both in the foreground and in the distance, are so managed, as, by the illusory aid of tinting, grouping, and shadowing, to assist in the production of a great and determinate effect. To evince the superiority of this mode of composition over that which prevailed on the Grecian stage, it is only necessary to reflect, that the concatenated series of events which is unfolded, with so much unity of design, in the single drama of Macbeth, could only be represented, on the simple and confined plan of the school of Athens, by a trilogy, or succession of distinct tragedies! Can a system, thus necessarily broken into insulated parts, be put into competition with the rich and full evolution of the romantic or Shakspearean drama?

It is evident, therefore, that the romantic or picturesque drama should be judged by laws and regulations of its own; that it is a distinct order of art, displaying great originality and invention, and a much more perfect and profound view of human life and its dependencies, than any anterior effort in the same department of literature; and as all the productions of our poet are exclusively referable to this order, of which he is, without dispute, the greatest master, a brief enquiry into the CONDUCT OF HIS DRAMA cannot fail to throw some light on the subject.

Of the three unities, upon which so much stress has been laid by the French critics, Shakspeare has in general, and, for the most part, very judiciously, rejected two. One of these, the unity of place, was, indeed, indissolubly connected with the tragedy of the Greeks; for as the chorus was continually on their stage, no curtain could be dropped, nor was any change of scene therefore possible; but the unity of time was most assuredly neither rigidly observed by them, nor did it constitute any essential part of their system; on the contrary, Aristotle, after remarking, "that the dramatic fable should have such a length that the connexion of the circumstances may easily be remembered," immediately afterwards

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, vol. i. p. 15, 16.

declares of this very length, that "as far as regards the time of the performance and the spectators, it has no relation to the poetic art," and that "as to the natural boundary of the action, the greater it is the better, provided it be perspicuous." * In fact, as to unity of place, no rule was required, this limitation, as we have seen, being the inevitable consequence of the defective and insulated construction of their dramatic fable; and as to unity of time, the observation which we have just quoted from Aristotle is decisive, the circumstances attending both these supposed laws being such as fully to warrant the assertion of Mr. Twining, who, commenting on the Stagyrte, observes, that "with respect to the strict unities of time and place, no such rules were imposed on the Greek poets by the critics, or by themselves; nor are imposed on any poet, either by the nature, or the end, of the dramatic imitation itself;" and we may add, that, in as far as both have been simultaneously reduced to practice, either by the Greeks themselves, or by their still more scrupulous imitators the French, have interest and probability been proportionably sacrificed.

Whether Shakspeare, therefore, acting solely from his own judgment, rejected, or, guided merely by the usage of his day, overlooked these unities, a great point was gained for all the lovers of nature and verisimilitude. For, omitting regulations which, though generally or partially observed by the ancients, were either altogether arbitrary, or only locally necessary, he has adopted two, of which it may be said, that neither time, circumstance, nor opinion, can diminish the utility. To unity of action, the indispensable requisite of every well-constituted fable, he has added, what in him is found more perfect than in any other writer, unity of feeling, as applicable not only to individual character, but to the prevailing tone and influence of each play. Thus, while it must be confessed that the former is, in a few instances, broken in upon, by the admission of extraneous personages or occurrences, in no respect is the latter, throughout the whole range of his productions, forgotten or violated.

It is to this sedulous attention in the preservation of unity of feeling, that Shakspeare owes much of his fascination and powers of impression over the hearts and minds of his audience. It has been duly panegyrised by the critics with respect to his delineation of character; but as referable to the expression and effect of an entire drama, it has been too much overlooked. What, for example, can be more distinct than the tone of feeling which pervades every portion of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, and how consistently is this tone preserved throughout each! Through the first, from its opening to its close, breathe the freshness and the fragrance of youth and spring, their sweetness, their innocency, and alas! their transiency; while in the second, a tempest of more than midnight horror, and the still more turbulent strife of human vice and passion, howl for ever in our ears! Again, how delightful is the tender and philosophic melancholy, which steals upon us in every scene of *As You Like It*, and how contrasted with the bustle and vivacity, the light and effervescent wit which animate, and sparkle in, the dialogue of *Much Ado about Nothing*! — We consider this unity, by which the separate parts of a drama are rendered so strictly subservient to a single and a common object, namely, the production of a combined and uniform impression, as one of the most remarkable proofs of the depth and comprehensiveness of the mind of Shakspeare.

This excellence is the more extraordinary, as no part in the conduct of his drama is perhaps so prominent, as that mixture of seriousness and mirth, of comic and tragic effect, which springs from the very structure itself of the romantic drama. But this interchange of emotion serves only to place the intention of the poet, and the fulness of his success, more completely in our view; for he has almost always contrived, that the ludicrous personages of his play should give essential aid to the pre-determined effect of the composition as a whole; and this co-operation

* Pye's Aristotle, 4to, 1792, p. 22.

is even most apparent, where the impression intended to be excited is the most tragic : thus the anguish which lacerates the bosom of Lear, when deserted by his children, and driven forth amid the horrors of the tempest, is augmented almost to madness by the sarcastic drollery of the fool; developed, indeed, with an energy and strength which no other expedient could have accomplished.

These contrasts, which are, in fact, of the very essence of the romantic drama, as requiring richer and more varied accompaniments than the antique species, form, in their whole spirit and effect, a sufficient apology, were one in the least necessary, for the tragi-comic texture of our author's principal productions.

By embracing in one view the whole of the checkered scene of human existence, its joys and sorrows, its perpetually shifting circumstances and relations, and by blending these into one harmonious picture, Shakspeare has achieved a work to which the ancient world had nothing similar, and which, of all the efforts of human genius, demands perhaps the widest and profoundest exertion of intellect. It demands a knowledge of a man, both as: genus and a species; of man, as acting from himself, and of man in society under all its aspects and revolutions it demands a knowledge of what has influenced and modified his character from the earliest dawn of record; and, above all, it demands a conversancy of the most intimate kind with his constitution, moral, intellectual, and religious; so that in detaching a portion of history for the purposes of dramatic composition, the philosopher shall be as discernible in the execution as the poet.

It is this depth and comprehension of design in the conduct of his drama, this amplitude of "a mind reflecting ages past,"* which, while it has rendered Shakspeare an object of admiration to the intelligent student of nature, has occasioned him to be so often and so grossly misinterpreted by the narrow critic and the careless reader.

To these brief remarks on the Genius and Conduct, it will be necessary to add a few observations on the Characters, the Passions, the Comic Painting, and the Imaginative Powers, of his drama.

"To give a stage,
Ample, and true with life,—voice, action, age,
To story coldly told—
To raise our ancient sovereigns from their hearse,
To enliven their pale trunks,"

and to make us

"Joy in their joy, and tremble at their rage,"

is, indeed, a task of the utmost magnitude and difficulty, but one in which our poet has succeeded with a felicity altogether unparalleled. His characters live and breathe before us; we perceive not only what they say and do, but what they feel and think; and we are tempted to believe, that like some magician of old, he possessed the art of transfusing himself into the frame, and of speaking through the organs, of those whom he wished to represent; so exactly has he drawn, without deviation from the general laws and broad tract of life, each class and condition of mankind.

Whether he delineate the possessor of a throne, or the tenant of a cottage; the warrior in battle, or the statesman in debate; youth in its fervour, or old age in its repose; guilt in agony, or innocence in peace; the votaries of pleasure, or the victims of despair; we behold each character developing itself, not through the medium of self-description, but, as in actual experience, through the influence and progression of events, and through the re-action of surrounding agents.

* This expression, and the verses which open some of the leading subjects of this summary, are taken from a poem "On worthy Master Shakspeare," supposed to have been the composition of Jasper Mayne, but which Mr. Godwin, if we recollect aright, for the book is not before us, is desirous of attributing, on account of its singular excellence, to the pen of Milton.—See his *Lives of E. and J. Philips*, 4to.

Thus, from the mutual working of conflicting interests and emotions, from their various powers of coalescence and repulsion, the characters of Shakspeare are, like those in real life, evolved with an energy and strength, with a freedom and boldness of outline which will, probably for ever, stamp them with the seal of unapproachable excellence.

Nor is he less distinguished for an illimitable sway over the Passions:—

“ To move
A chilling pity—
To strike both joy and ire;—
To steer the affections; and by heavenly fire
Mould us anew,—
Yet so to temper passion, that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain, and eyes in tears
Both weep and smile”—

are some of the noblest attributes of the dramatic poet, and more peculiarly characteristic of Shakspeare than of any other writer. The birth and progress of the numerous passions which awaken pity and terror, he has unfolded, indeed, with such minute fidelity to nature, that it is scarcely possible, as Madame De Staël has observed, to sympathise thoroughly with Shakspeare's sufferers, without tasting also of the bitter experience of real life.

The pathos of Shakspeare is either simple or figurative, in accordancy with the character, and in proportion to the intensity of the feeling, from which it emanates. The sigh of suffering merit, or the pang of unrequited love, affects us most when clothed in the language of perfect simplicity; but the energy, the paroxysm of extreme sorrow, naturally bursts into figurative language, nay often demands that very play of imagery and words, for which our bard has been ignorantly condemned, but which, like laughter amid the horrors of madness, can alone impress us with an adequately keen sense of the overwhelming agony of the soul. Of these two modes of exciting pity, we possess very striking examples in the sufferings of Katherine in *Henry the Eighth*, and in the parental afflictions of Constance in *King John*.

The excitement, indeed, of unallayed pity must necessarily either be very short, or very painful, and it has therefore been the endeavour of our dramatist, according to the language of the fine old bard just quoted,

“ so to temper passion, that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain; ”

and this he has effected, and often with great skill and judgment, by a transient intermixture of playful fancy or comic allusion, of which, instances without number are to be found dispersed throughout his plays.

Yet great as we acknowledge the influence of Shakspeare to have been, in eliciting the tears of pity and compassion, he has surpassed, not only others but himself, in the power and extent of his dominion over the sources and operation of terror. “It may be said of crimes painted by Shakspeare,” remarks an accomplished critic, “as the Bible says of Death, that he is the KING OF TERRORS;” * an assertion fully warranted by an appeal to *Richard*, to *Lear*, to *Hamlet*, to *Macbeth*, where this soul-harrowing emotion, as derived from natural or supernatural causes, from remorseless cruelty, from phrenzy-stricken sorrow, from conscious guilt or withering fear, is depicted with an energy so awful and appalling as to blanch the cheek and chill the blood of every intellectual being. More especially do we pursue his creations with trembling hope and breathless apprehension, when he traces the wanderings of despair, when he presents to our view that “shipwreck of moral nature,” in which “the storm of life surpasses its strength.” †

* “The Influence of Literature upon Society,” by Madame De Staël-Holstein, vol. i. p. 294. Translation, 2d. edit. 1812.

† *Ibid.* p. 305.

The scenes which are necessarily required for the development of villany and its artifices, must, of course, disclose many deeds of atrocity and vice, from which the unpolluted mind recoils with shuddering astonishment; but vividly, and justly too, as these have been portrayed by our poet, in all their native deformity, he has, with only one or two exceptions, so managed the exhibition, that, unless to very feeble minds, the impression never becomes too painful to be borne. Some qualifying property in the head or heart of the offender, or some repose from the intervention of more amiable or more cheerful characters, occurs to subdue to its proper tone what would otherwise amount to torture. Thus the disgust which would be apt to arise from contemplating the gigantic iniquity of Richard the Third, is corrected by an almost involuntary admiration of his intellectual vigour; and the merciless revenge of Shylock, being perpetually broken in upon by the alleviating harmonies of love and pity in the characters of those who surround him, passes not beyond the due limits of tragic emotion.

The inimitable felicity, indeed, with which Shakspeare has intermingled the finest chords of pity and of terror, such as we listen to, with unsated rapture in his *Romeo*, his *Lear*, and his *Othello*, has been a subject of eulogium to thousands, but never can it meet, from mortal tongue, with praise of corresponding worth. For who shall paint the beauty of those transitions, when on a night of horror breaks the first bright ray of heaven, the dawn of light and hope; when, like the sounds of an *Æolian harp* amid the pauses of a tempest, the still soft voice of love succeeds the tumult of despair, and whispers to the troubled spirit accents of mercy, peace, and pardon?

It is perhaps only of Shakspeare that it can be said with truth, that his comic possesses the same unrivalled merit as his tragic drama. The force and versatility of his painting in this department, its richness, its depth, and its expression, and, more than all, the originality and fecundity of invention which it everywhere exhibits, astonish, and almost overwhelm the mind in its endeavour to form an estimate of powers so gigantic, and which may not be altogether incommensurate with its scope and comprehensiveness. Whether we consider his delineations of this kind as the product of pure fiction, or founded on the costume of his age, they alike delight us by their novelty and their adhesion to nature. *Falstaff* and *Parolles* are, in many respects, as much the birth of fancy as *Caliban* or *Ariel*; but being strictly confined within the pale of humanity, and displaying all its features with living truth and distinctness, the inventive felicity of their combination is apt to escape us through our familiarity with its component parts. His *Fools*, or *Clowns*, on the contrary, were, in his time, of daily occurrence, and not only to be found in the court of the monarch, and the castle of the baron, but in the hall of the squire, and even beneath the roof of the churchman; yet, from comparing what history has recorded of this motley tribe with the spirited sketches of our author, how has he heightened their wit and sarcasm!—to such a degree, indeed, that they have frequently become in his hands personages of poetic growth, wild and grotesque, it is true, yet powerfully original.

This pre-eminence of Shakspeare in the characterisation of his fools probably led to their dramatic extinction; for it must have been found very difficult to support their tone and spirit after such a model. *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, it has been observed, have but rarely introduced them; *Ben Jonson* and *Massinger* never; and yet the court-fool had not ceased to exist in the reign of *Charles the First*, nor the domestic until the commencement of the eighteenth century.*

Another of the great distinctions which have elevated Shakspeare so completely above the dramatic class of poets, is the splendour and infinity of his imagination—

* Of court-fools, it is observed by Mr. Douce, that "Muckle John, the fool of Charles the First, and the successor of *Archee Armstrong*, is perhaps the last regular personage of the kind."—*Illustrations*, vol. ii. p. 308.

We also find an epitaph by *Dean Swift*, on *Dicky Pierce*, the Earl of *Suffolk's* fool, who was buried in *Berkeley church-yard*, June 18, 1728, in the same ingenious essay.

“ To out-run hasty time, retrieve the fates,
 Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates
 Of death and Lethe——by art to learn
 The physiognomy of shades, and give
 Them sudden birth——‘ and’ from ‘ his’ lofty throne,
 Create and rule a world, and work upon
 Mankind by secret engines,”

was deemed, even by his contemporaries, the peculiar destiny of our bard; a destination that has been still more thoroughly felt and acknowledged by succeeding ages, and by which, without sacrificing any of the more legitimate provinces of the drama, he has acquired for his poetry that stamp of glowing inspiration, which more than places it on a level with the daring flights of Homer, of Dante, or of Milton; while, at the same time, there exclusively belongs to him an insinuating loveliness of fancy that endears him to our feelings, and brings with it a recognition of that visionary happiness which charmed our earliest youth, when all around us breathed enchantment, and the heart alone responded to the fairy melodies of love and hope.

What contrast, for instance, of poetic power has ever exceeded that which we experience in passing from the mysterious horrors of Hamlet and Macbeth, from the visitations of the midnight spectre, and the unhallowed rites of witchcraft, to the sportive revelry of the tripping elves, and the exquisite delights of Ariel; from the fiend-like character of Iago, from the soul-harrowing distraction of Lear, and the unearthly wildness of Edgar, to that music of paradise which falls melting from the tongue of Juliet or Miranda!

Were we to lengthen this summary by any dissertation on the morality of our author's drama, it might justly be considered as a work of supererogation. So completely, indeed, does this, the most valuable result of composition, pervade every portion of his dramatic writings, that we can scarcely open a page of his best plays without being forcibly struck by its lessons of virtue and utility; such as are applicable, not only to extraordinary occasions, but to the common business and routine of life; and such as, while they must make every individual better acquainted with his own nature and conditional destiny, are calculated, beyond any other productions of unrevealed wisdom, to improve that nature, and to render that destiny more happy and exalted.

Still less it is necessary to comment on the faults of Shakspeare, for they lie immediately on the surface. When we add, that some coarsenesses and indelicacies which, however, as they excite no passion and flatter no vice, are, in a moral light, not injurious; some instances of an injudicious play on words, and a few violations, not of essential, but merely of technical, costume, form their chief amount, no little surprise, it is possible, may be excited; but let us recollect, that many of the defects which prejudice and ignorance have attributed to Shakspeare, have, on being duly weighed and investigated, assumed the character of positive excellencies. Among these, for example, it will be sufficient to mention the composite or mixed nature of his drama, and his general neglect of the unities of time and place, features in the conduct of his plays which, though they have for a long period heaped upon his head a torrent of contemptuous abuse, are, at length, acknowledged to have laid the foundation, and to have furnished the noblest model of a dramatic literature, in its principles and spirit infinitely more profound and comprehensive than that which has descended to us from the shores of Greece.

It was in reference to the narrow and mistaken views which were once entertained of the genius of Shakspeare; it was in refutation of the calumnies of Rymer, and the senseless invective of Voltaire, who had charged us with an extravagant admiration of this barbarian, that Mr. Morgan, forty years ago, stood forward the avowed champion, and, we may add, one of the most eloquent defenders which his country has yet produced, of England's calumniated Bard.

Speaking of the magic influence which our poet almost invariably exerts over his auditors, he remarks, that

“ On such an occasion, a fellow, like Rymer, waking from his trance, shall lift up his Constable's staff, and charge this great Magician, this daring practiser of arts inhibited, in the name of Aristotle, to surrender; whilst Aristotle himself, disowning his wretched officer, would fall prostrate at his feet and acknowledge his supremacy.—‘ O supreme of Dramatic excellence! (might he say) not to me be imputed the insolence of fools. The bards of Greece were confined within the narrow circle of the Chorus, and hence they found themselves constrained to practise, for the most part, the precision, and copy the details of nature. I followed them, and knew not that a larger circle might be drawn, and the drama extended to the whole reach of human genius. Convinced, I see that a more compendious nature may be obtained; a nature of effects only, to which neither the relations of place, or continuity of time, are always essential. Nature, condescending to the faculties and apprehensions of man, has drawn through human life a regular chain of visible causes and effects: but Poetry delights in surprize, conceals her steps, seizes at once upon the heart, and obtains the sublime of things without betraying the rounds of her ascent. True Poesy is magic, not nature: an effect from causes hidden or unknown. To the Magician I prescribed no laws; his law and his power are one; his power is his law.—If his end is obtained, who shall question his course? Means, whether apparent or hidden, are justified in Poesy by success; but then most perfect and most admirable when most concealed.’—

“ ‘ Yes,’ whatever may be the neglect of some, or the censure of others, there are those, who firmly believe that this wild, this uncultivated Barbarian has not yet obtained one half of his fame; and who trust that some new Stagyrite will arise, who, instead of pecking at the surface of things, will enter into the inward soul of his compositions, and expel, by the force of congenial feelings, those foreign impurities which have stained and disgraced his page. And as to those spots which still remain, they may perhaps become invisible to those who shall seek them thro’ the medium of his beauties, instead of looking for those beauties, as is too frequently done, thro’ the smoke of some real or imputed obscurity. When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present Editors and Commentators, and when the very name of Voltaire, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciola shall resound with the accents of this Barbarian. In his native tongue he shall roll the genuine passions of nature; nor shall the griefs of Lear be alleviated, or the charms and wit of Rosalind be abated by time.” *

Since this eloquently prophetic passage was written, how has the fame of Shakspeare increased! Not only in England has the growth of a more enlightened criticism operated in his favour, but on the Continent an enthusiasm for his genius has been kindled, which, we may venture to say, will never be extinguished. In Germany, the efforts of Herder, of Goëthe, of Tieck, and, above all, of Augustus William Schlegel, the “ new Stagyrite,” as he may justly be termed, the best critic on, and the best translator, of our author,† have, as it were, naturalised the poet; and if in France the labours of Lemercier and Ducis have failed to produce a similar effect, yet a taste for Shakspeare in the original has been very powerfully heightened by the nervous and elegant compositions of De Staël.

Nor has Europe alone borne testimony to the progress of his reputation; not twenty years had passed over the glowing predictions of Morgan, when the first transatlantic edition of Shakspeare appeared at Philadelphia;‡ nor is it too much to believe that, ere another century elapse, the plains of Northern America, and even the unexplored wilds of Australasia, shall be as familiar with the fictions of our poet, as are now the vallies of his native Avon, or the statelier banks of the Thames.

It is, indeed, a most delightful consideration for every lover and cultivator of our literature, and one which should excite, amongst our authors, an increased spirit of emulation, that the language in which they write, is destined to be that of so large a portion of the new world; a field of glory to which the genius of Shakspeare will assuredly give an unperishable permanency; for the diffusion and durability of his fame are likely to meet with no limit, save that which circumscribes the globe, and closes the existence of time.

* Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff, p. 69, 70, 71, and 64, 65.

† For just and discriminative characters of Schlegel and his writings, see the Germany of Madame De Staël, and the Monthly and Edinburgh Reviews.

‡ In the year 1795. Printed and sold by Bioren and Madan.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Brief View of Dramatic Poetry, and its Cultivators, during Shakspeare's Connection with the Stage.

THAT the master-spirit which Shakspeare exhibited in the eyes of his contemporaries; that the great improvements which he had made on the drama of Peele and Marlowe, and their associates, should excite the wonder and call for the emulation of his age, were events naturally to be expected. He was accordingly the founder of a school of dramatic art which continued to flourish until extinguished by those convulsions that destroyed the monarch, and overturned the government of the country,—a school to which we have since had nothing similar, or even approximating in excellence.

The fate, however, of the leader and his disciples has been widely different. During the life-time of Shakspeare, the spirit of competition forbade an open acknowledgment of his pre-eminence, and those who had run the race of glory with him, and outlived his day, had influence sufficient, either from personal interest, or the charm of novelty, to procure a more frequent representation of their own productions, however inferior, than of those of their departed luminary. But when the grave had closed alike on their great exemplar and on themselves, apart, indeed, was their allotment in the estimation of the living; for while the former sprang from the tomb with fresh energy and beauty, over the latter dropped, comparatively, the mantle of oblivion! Yet, not for ever!

Though lost, for a time, in the effulgence of that lustre which has continued to brighten ever since its revivescence, they have nevertheless, through an intrinsic though more subdued brilliancy of their own, begun, at length, to emerge into day, and their demand upon the justice of criticism, for their station and their fame, is loud and imperative.

Let us, therefore, as far as our brief limits will permit, and in furtherance of what has been so judiciously commenced, co-operate in the endeavour to apportion to these immediate successors of our matchless bard, the honour due to their exertions. If correctly attributed, it cannot be trifling, and may assist in forming a just notion of the most valuable period of our dramatic poesy.

We shall commence with those who, in their own age, were deemed the rivals, and followed, indeed, fast upon the footsteps of Shakspeare, hesitating not to give priority of notice to the name of John Fletcher, who, though hitherto inseparably united in fame and publication with his friend Francis Beaumont, deserves, both from the comparative number and value of his pieces, a separate and exclusive consideration.

Of the fifty-three plays which have been ascribed to these poetical friends, it appears that not more than nine or ten were the joint productions of Beaumont and Fletcher; in still fewer was he assisted by Massinger, Rowley, and Field, and the ample residue, independent of two pieces now lost, and known to have been his sole composition, was therefore the entire product of Fletcher's genius.* With this curious fact, we were first made acquainted by Sir Aston Cokain, who, speaking of the thirty-four plays of these poets, as published in the folio of 1647, informs us, that

— “ Beaumont of those many writ in few;
And Massinger in other few : the main
Being sole issues of sweet Fletcher's brain.” †

* Vide Malone's Dryden, vol. i. part ii. p. 101.

† Verses addressed to Mr. Humphrey Mosely, published in his Poems, Epigrams, &c. 1658.

In fact, as Sir Aston has elsewhere told us,* the bulk of the collection was written after Beaumont's death, which took place in 1615; the fecundity of Fletcher being so great, that in the interval between that event and his own decease in 1625, he had produced nearly forty dramas, besides some which were left in an unfinished state, and completed by Shirley.

It is also necessary to add, that the ten plays which issued from the firm of Beaumont and Fletcher are, by no means, the best of the entire series: they are *Philaster*,—*The Maids Tragedy*,—*King and No King*,—*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*,—*Cupid's Revenge*,—*The Coxcomb*,—*The Captain*,—*The Honest Man's Fortune*,—*The Scornful Lady*, and *The False One*;† productions, in allusion to which it has been said, and perhaps with no great injustice, that "if the plays of Beaumont were thrown out of the collection by Beaumont and Fletcher, the remainder would form a richer ore."‡

Warrantable, therefore, upon this statement, must it be deemed, should we now drop the name of Beaumont, after observing, that a portion of the merits and defects of Fletcher may be attributed to his friend, and that, in the estimation of Ben Jonson (on this subject the most unexceptionable testimony), he possessed, beyond all others of his age, a sound and correct judgment. §

The characteristic of Fletcher, in the serious department of his art, was a peculiar mastery in the delineation of the softer passions, especially of love. There is a sweetly pensive tone in many of his pictures of this kind, which steals upon the mind with the most insinuating charm, producing that species of pathos which soothes while it gently agitates the soul; a feeling too sad and melancholy for the genius of comedy, and too mild and subdued for that of tragedy, but admirably adapted to an intermediate style of composition, of which he has given us some happy instances under the title of *tragi-comedy*. It must be confessed, however, that an impression of feebleness and effeminacy, a sickliness of sentiment, and a want of dignity in the pity which he endeavours to excite, but too often accompany his efforts, even in this his favourite province.

Yet not unfrequently did Fletcher aspire to the loftiest heights of the dramatic muse; to the terrible, to the wildly awful, to the agony of grief. But here he sank beneath the genius of Shakspeare; in his endeavour to be great, there is a labour and contortion which frequently betrays the struggle to have been painfully arduous; an impression which we never receive from the drama of his predecessor, who seems to attain the highest elevation with an ease and spontaneity of movement, which suggests an idea, approaching to sublimity, of the fulness and extent of his resources. But, as an elegant critic has observed, Fletcher was "too mistrustful of Nature; he always goes a little on one side of her. Shakspeare chose her without a reserve: and had riches, power, understanding, and long-life, with her, for a dowry." **

Very different, however, was the result of his efforts, when he touched the gaieties of life; for in this path, he moves with a grace and legerity which has not often been equalled. He displays, it is true, little humour, and consequently not much strength of character; but we are told, on good authority, †† that no poet before him painted the conversation of the gentlemen of his day with such fidelity and truth; a declaration which impresses us with an high opinion of the vivacity and intellectual smartness of the dialogue of that age; for there is in the representation of Fletcher an almost perpetual effervescency and corruscation of wit and repartee.

The imagination of Fletcher, when not straining after the eagle wing of the

* Verses addressed to Mr. Charles Cotton.

† See Malone's *Dryden*, vol. i. part ii. p. 101. note.

‡ *Monthly Review*, new series, vol. lxxxi. p. 126.

§ Malone's *Dryden*, vol. i. part ii. p. 100.—Fuller tells us, in his quaint but emphatic manner, that Beaumont brought "the *ballast* of judgment," and Fletcher "the *sail of phantasie*."—*Worthies*, part ii. p. 288.

** Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, p. 409.

†† Dryden on *Dramatic Poesy*.

bard of Avon, was fertile and felicitous in an extraordinary degree. The romantic, the fanciful, the playful, are epithets peculiarly descriptive of its range and tone, within which he frequently emulates with success the excellence of his great master. There appears, indeed, in several of his pieces, an evident intention of entering the lists with Shakspeare. Thus the exquisitely pleasing character of Euphrasia, under the disguise of a page, in *Philaster*, was undoubtedly intended to rival the similar concealments in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, in *As You Like It*, in *Cymbeline*, and in *Twelfth Night*. Amoret, in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, is a delightful counterpart of Perdita, in *The Winter's Tale*, and throughout *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and especially in the character of the Jailor's daughter, there is a striking, and, in general, a very happy effort made, to copy the express colouring of Shakspeare's style, and his mode of representing the wanderings of a disordered intellect.

But when, regardless of the hazardous nature of the experiment, he attempts, in his *Sea Voyage*, to emulate the magic structure and wild imagery of *The Tempest*, his ambition serves but to show, that he had formed a very inadequate estimate of his own powers.

Yet the failure in such an enterprise can reflect no disgrace, and from what has been said, it must necessarily be inferred, that we consider Fletcher as holding a very high, if not the highest rank, in the school of Shakspeare.

How much is it to be lamented then, that excellence such as this should have been polluted by the grossest spirit of licentiousness; for it would appear, from the tenour of many of our author's plays, that, in his vocabulary, sensuality and sensibility were synonymous terms; so nakedly and ostentatiously has he brought forward the most immodest impulses of sexual appetite. Shakspeare may be, and is, occasionally, coarse and unreserved in his language; but, if compared with Fletcher, the nudity of his expressions is like the marble statue of a vestal, when contrasted with the wanton exposure of a prostitute.

As we wish to be spared the pain of reverting to such a subject, for which the age of Fletcher and his successors offers, unfortunately, but too many opportunities, it shall here be closed with a single expression of regret, that a department of poetry which, in itself, seems better calculated than any other to serve the cause of virtue, should be degraded to a purpose thus base and unworthy.*

On a level with, if not one degree above, the writings of Fletcher, follow the purer and more chastised productions of Philip Massinger, a poet of unwearied vigour and consummate elegance. That he had, in conjunction with others, composed for the stage some years anterior to the death of Shakspeare, there is every reason to conclude; for his first arrival in London, in 1606, was, we are told, under necessitous circumstances, and with the view of dedicating his talents to dramatic literature; and though his *Virgin Martyr*, his earliest publication, did not appear until 1622, it was a notorious fact, that he had written in conjunction both with Beaumont and Fletcher.† It is almost certain, indeed, from what Mr. Gifford has stated, that, in the interval just mentioned, he had brought on the stage not less than eight or ten plays.‡

The English drama never suffered a greater loss (for all Shakspeare's pieces have descended to us) than in the havoc which time and negligence have committed among the works of Massinger; for of thirty-eight plays attributed to his pen, only eighteen have been preserved!

Massinger, like Fletcher, pursued the path in which Shakspeare had preceded

* Would that the Commentators on Shakspeare had pursued the plan which Mr. Gifford has adopted in his edition of Massinger, who, speaking of the freedoms of his author, declares, that "those who examine the notes with a prurient eye, will find no great gratification of their licentiousness. I have called in no 'one' (he adds) to drivel out gratuitous obscenities in uncouth language; no 'one' to ransack the annals of a brothel for secrets 'better hid;' where I wished not to detain the reader, I have been silent, and instead of aspiring to the fame of a licentious commentator, sought only for the quiet approbation with which the father or the husband may reward the faithful editor."—Massinger, vol. i. p. lxxxiii, lxxxiv.

† Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. p. xii, xiv. Introduction.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. xviii.—xx.

him with such imperishable glory; but he wants the tenderness and wit of the former, and that splendour of imagination and that dominion over the passions, which characterise the latter. He has, however, qualities of his own, sufficiently great and attractive, to gift him with the envied lot of being contemplated, in union with these two bards, as one of the chief pillars and supporters of the Romantic Drama.

He exhibits, in the first place, a perfectibility, both in diction and versification, of which we have, in dramatic poesy, at least, no corresponding example. There is a transparency and perspicuity in the texture of his composition, a sweetness, harmony, and ductility, together with a blended strength and ease in the structure of his metre, which, in his best performances, delight, and never satiate the ear.

To this, in some degree, technical merit, must be added a spirit of commanding eloquence, a dignity and force of thought, which, while they approach the precincts of sublimity, and indicate great depth and clearness of intellect, show, by the nervous elegance of language in which they are clothed, a combination and comprehension of talent of very unfrequent occurrence.

These qualities are, it must be allowed, not peculiar to dramatic poetry; but when we find, that to their possession are added a powerful discrimination and marked consistency of character, no inconsiderable display of humour, much fertility of invention in the preparation and development of his incidents, and an unprecedented degree of grace and amenity in the construction of several of his comic scenes, together with a fund of ethic knowledge, an exquisite sense of moral feeling, and above all, a glow of piety, in many instances amounting to sublimity, we willingly ascribe to Massinger originality and dramatic excellence of no inferior order.

But when Dr. Ferriar, closing his "Essay on the Writings of Massinger," asserts that he "ranks immediately under Shakspeare himself,"* we must crave permission to hesitate for a moment, in reference to the enchanting tenderness of Fletcher.

"If there be a class of writers, of which, above all others," observes Mr. Gilchrist, "England may justly be proud, it is of those, for the stage, coeval with and immediately succeeding Shakspeare:"† an observation which the names alone of Fletcher and Massinger would sufficiently justify; but when to these we are enabled to add such fellow-artists as Ford, Webster, Middleton, etc., we are astonished that even the talents of Shakspeare should, for so long a period, have eclipsed their fame.

FORD's first appearance as an author, was in a copy of verses to the memory of the Earl of Devonshire, in 1606, and his earliest play of which we have the date of performance, was "A Bad Beginning makes a Good Ending," acted at court, in 1613,‡ but it is probable that the three plays mentioned with this, in Mr. Warburton's Collection, and like it, never published, and now lost,§ were likewise early, and perhaps anterior, compositions.

As it was the fashion, at this period, for dramatic writers to commence their course in conjunction with others, we find Ford accepting frequent assistance from his friends: thus *The Sun's Darling*, *The Fairy Knight*, and *the Bristowe Merchant*, were written in conjunction with Decker: and *The Witch of Edmon-ton* with the aid of both Decker and Rowley.

Of the pieces which were exclusively the product of his own genius, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, though not published the first, was the first written, and was succeeded by the *Lover's Melancholy*, *The Broken Heart*, *Love's Sacrifice*, *Perkin Warbeck*, *The Fancies Chast and Noble*, and *The Ladies Tryal*.

Ford possesses nothing of the energy and majesty of Massinger, and but little of

* Gifford's Massinger, vol. i. Essay on the Writings of Massinger, p. cxxvi.

† Letter to William Gifford, Esq. on the late edition of Ford's Plays, 8vo. 1811, p. 7.

‡ Vide Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary, vol. xiv. p. 465.

§ Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxv. p. 219.

the playful gaiety and picturesque fancy of Fletcher, yet scarcely Shakspeare himself has exceeded him in the excitement of pathetic emotion. Of this, his two Tragedies of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, and the Broken Heart, bear the most overpowering testimony. Though too much loaded in their fable with a wildness and horror often felt as repulsive, they are noble specimens of dramatic genius; and who that has a heart to feel, or an eye to weep, can, in the first of these productions, view even the unhallowed loves of Giovanni and Annabella; or in the second, the hapless and unmerited fates of Calantha and Penthea, with a cheek unbathed in tears!

JOHN WEBSTER, whom we shall place immediately after Ford, as next, perhaps, in talent, resembled him in a predilection for the terrible and the strange, but with a cast of character still more lawless and impetuous. Of the six plays which he produced, two were written in conjunction with William Rowley, and are comedies; the remaining four, containing three tragedies, and a tragi-comedy, are the issue of his unaided pen. The tragedies, especially *The White Devil*, or *Vittoria Corombona*, first printed in 1612, and the *Dutchesse of Malfy*, in 1623, are very striking, though, in many respects, very eccentric proofs of dramatic vigour.

It appears, however, from the dedication to the "*White Devil*," that our author was well acquainted with the laws of the ancient drama, and that "willingly, and not ignorantly," he adopted the Romantic or Shakspearean form. The last paragraph of this address is a pleasing instance of his diffidence, liberality, and good sense:—"For mine own part," says he, "I have ever truly cherished my good opinion of other men's worthy labours, especially of that full and heightened style of master Chapman; the laboured and understanding works of master Jonson; the no less worthy composures of the both worthily excellent master Beaumont and master Fletcher; and lastly (without wrong last to be named), the right happy and copious industry of master Shakspeare, master Decker, and master Heywood, wishing what I write may be read by their light; protesting that, in the strength of mine own judgment, I know them so worthy, that though I rest silent in my own work, yet to most of theirs I dare (without flattery) fix that of Martial:—

—— "non norunt hæc monumenta mori." *

The silence which modesty dictated to Webster, ought long ago to have been broken, by a declaration, that he was finally entitled to a niche in the same temple of Fame with those whom he has here commemorated. In his pictures of wretchedness and despair, he has introduced touches of expression which curdle the very blood with terror, and make the hair stand erect. Of this, the death of *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, with all its preparatory horrors, is a most distinguishing proof. The fifth act of his *Vittoria Corombona* shows, also, with what occasional skill he could imbibe the imagination of Shakspeare, particularly where its features seem to breathe a more than earthly wildness. The danger, however, which almost certainly attends such an aspiration after what may be called inimitable excellence, Webster has not escaped; for, where his master moves free and ethereal, an interpreter for other worlds, he but too often seems laboriously striving to break from terrestrial fetters; and, when liberated, he is, not unfrequently, "an extravagant and erring spirit." Yet, with all their faults, his tragedies are, most assuredly, stamped with, and consecrated by, the seal of genius.

Not less than twenty-four plays are ascribed to THOMAS MIDDLETON, of which, sixteen at least, appear to owe their existence entirely to himself, the rest are written in conjunction with Jonson, Fletcher, Massinger, Decker, and Rowley. Middleton, it is probable, began to compose for the stage shortly after Shakspeare, † for one

* Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii. p. 3.

† *The Old Law*, in which he assisted Rowley, was acted in its original state, and before it was re-touched by Massinger, in 1599.

of his pieces was published as early as 1602, and eight had passed the press before 1612. His talents were principally directed towards comedy, only two tragedies, *The Changeling*, and *Women beware Women*, and two tragi-comedies, *The Phoenix* and *The Witch*, being included in the list of his productions.

Humour, wit, and character, though in a degree inferior to that which distinguishes the preceding poets, are to be found in the comedy of Middleton: and, occasionally, a pleasing interchange of elegant imagery and tender sentiment. His tragedy is not devoid of pathos, though possessing little dignity or elevation; but there is, in many of his plays, and especially in the tragi-comedy of *The Witch*, a strength and compass of imagination which entitle him to a very respectable rank among the cultivators of the Romantic drama.

A more than common celebrity has attached itself to this last-named composition, in consequence of the conjecture of Mr. Steevens, that it preceded *Macbeth*, and afforded to Shakspeare the *prima stamina* of the supernatural machinery of that admirable play. This may readily be granted, without aspersing the originality of the Bard of Avon; for if we except the mere idea of the introduction of such an agency into dramatic poetry, there is little beside a few verbal forms of incantation, and two or three metrical invocations, of singular notoriety perhaps at the period, which can be considered as betraying marks of imitation. In every other respect, affinity or resemblance there is none; for the *Witches* of Middleton and of Shakspeare are beings essentially distinct both in origin and office. The former are creatures of flesh and blood, possessing power, indeed, to inflict disease, and to execute more than common mischief, but very subordinate instruments of evil, when compared with the spiritual essence and mysterious sublimity of the *Weird Sisters*, who are the authors not only of nameless deeds, but who are nameless themselves, who float upon the midnight storm, direct the elemental strife, and, more than this, who wield the passions and the thoughts of man.

The hags of Middleton are, however, drawn with a bold and creative pencil, and seem to take a middle station between the terrific sisterhood of Shakspeare, and the traditionary witch of the country-village. They are pictures full of fancy, but not kept sufficiently aloof from the ludicrous and familiar.

On the same elevation with Middleton, as to dramatic merit, may we place the name of THOMAS DECKER, who, if he has not equalled his contemporary in the faculty of imagination, has, in some instances, exceeded him, in the vigorous conception of his characters, and the skilful management of his fable. So early as 1600, had he published one of his best dramas, under the title of *Old Fortunatus*, which, together with *The Honest Whore*, printed in 1604, very adequately prove that his talents were of no inferior class; the character of Orleans in the first of these plays, and that of *Bellafront* in the second, exhibiting not only many beautiful ideas in richly poetical language, but many indications of an original and discriminative mind.

The fertility of Decker was great; for independent of numerous pieces of a miscellaneous kind, he wrote, or contributed to write, not fewer than thirty-two plays. Several of these, however, were never printed, and are not now, probably, in existence; and two, which were once in Mr. Warburton's possession, perished with his ill-fated collection. There is reason to suppose that twelve, if not fifteen, originated solely with himself, and for the remainder, his associates were Middleton, Massinger and Ford, Webster, Day and Rowley. With the latter and Ford, he wrote "*The Witch of Edmonton*," the execution of which shows, that, though he has availed himself, with much effect, of the common superstitions connected with his subject, he was, in point of fancy, inferior to Middleton, the *Witch* of this triumvirate being little more than the ignorant and self-deluded victim of the folly of the times, then, under the shape of decrepit and female old age, to be found in almost every hamlet in the kingdom.

Decker has been more known to posterity by his connection and quarrel with Ben Jonson, than by his own works, a fate which has also obscured the writings

and reputation of John Marston, who, in his life-time, was not undeservedly celebrated both as a dramatic and a satiric poet. In the former capacity he produced eight plays, of which the two parts of Antonio and Mellida, "The Insatiate Countess," and "The Malcontent," published as early as 1602, 1603, and 1604, reflect great credit on his abilities. These, and indeed all his dramas, give evidence of great wealth and vigour of description, of much felicity in expression, and of much passionate eloquence; nor are his characters raw or indistinct sketches, but highly coloured and well supported. The compliment, however, which some modern writers have paid him, on the score of chastity of thought and style, is, we are sorry to say, most unmerited; for neither is it supported by the opinion of his contemporaries, nor by the testimony of his own writings. So greatly was he a sinner in this respect, that an old satirist says of him,—

"Tut, what cares he for modest, close couched terms,
Cleanly to gird our looser libertines?
Give him plain-naked words, stripped from their shirts,
That might beseeem plain-dealing Aretine." *

If fecundity were a test of genius, no writer, with the exception of Lopez de Vega, would stand upon such elevated ground as Thomas Heywood, who tells us, in the Preface to his "English Traveller," a tragi-comedy, that it was "one reserved amongst 220 in which he had either an entire hand or at the least a main finger;" a degree of industry and fertility which may justly excite our astonishment.

It is perhaps equally extraordinary, that, in periods so late as the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, and when the art of printing was in full activity, only twenty-six of this prodigious number should have issued from the press, a paucity for which their author accounts, in the preface just quoted, in the following manner: "One reason," he avers, "is that many of them, by shifting and change of companies, have been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors, who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come in print; and a third, that it never was any great ambition in me, to be, in this kind, voluminously read."

This apathy or modesty has, no doubt, deprived us of some interesting plays; for though Heywood had little of the enthusiasm or fancy of the genuine poet, there are in several of the pieces which remain, an unaffected ease and simplicity, and a power of touching the heart, which merit preservation in no common degree. He abounds, too, in pictures of domestic life very minutely finished, correct without being cold, and effective without being overcharged. To his skill in exciting pathetic emotion, his tragedy entitled "A Woman killed with Kindness" bears the most impressive testimony.

Heywood, as may be conceived, began early, and continued long to write. Of the dramas which are left us, the first published, was his "Death of Robert Earle of Huntington," dated 1601, and the last, the tragi-comedy of "Fortune by Land and Sea," dated 1655. He was occasionally assisted by Rowley, Brome, etc.

Greatly superior in poetic force and vigour to Heywood, but equally inferior as to truth of dramatic imitation, we have now to mention the venerably epic name of George Chapman, the translator of Homer, and the friend of Shakspeare and Jonson, with whom, as a writer for the stage, he was nearly coeval.

Though the author of more comedies than tragedies, the genius of Chapman was infinitely better calculated for the latter province. Many beauties, it must be granted, are to be found in some of his comedies, especially in his "All Fooles," and "Widdowe's Tears," but they stand aloof from the character of the department in which they are included. It is, in fact, in the lofty and heroic drama, in the more elevated and descriptive parts of tragedy, that he excels; in a grandeur often wild and irregular, but highly animated and striking. Thus the two

* *Returne from Parnassus*, act i. sc. 2.—Vide *Ancient British Drama*, vol. i. p. 49.

tragedies, entitled "Bussy D'Ambois," breathe a chivalric spirit truly inspiring, and, however censured by Dryden* for tumour and incorrectness of style, excite in the reader a sensation of involuntary transport. It will readily be admitted, however, that such a mode of composition is by no means adapted to dramatic purposes, and presents no safe or legitimate model. Chapman wrote sixteen plays, besides assisting Jonson and Marston in "Eastward Hoe," and Shirley in at least two of his productions.

With nearly all the poets whom we have hitherto mentioned did William Rowley unite in the composition of various pieces for the stage; namely, with Massinger, Middleton, and Heywood, Ford, Decker, and Webster, and, it has even been said, with Shakspeare, in a play entitled "The Birth of Merlin." For this last association, however, there appears to be no other foundation than the bookseller's assertion, who printed this play in 1662, and which is totally unsupported by any other evidence external or internal.

But Rowley wanted not talent and originality for independent exertion, and five dramas out of nine which have been attributed solely to his pen, have reached us from the press. That a writer who was deemed a worthy assistant in such plays as "The Witch of Edmonton," "The Thracian Wonder," and "The Spanish Gipsy," must have possessed no very inferior abilities, can admit of little doubt, and is confirmed indeed by his own exclusive compositions; for "A Match at Midnight," and "All's Lost by Lust," the former in the comic, and the latter in the tragic, department of his art, evince, in incident and humour, in character and in pathos, powers which repel the charge of mediocrity. Upon the whole, however, we consider him as ranking last in the roll of worthies who have thus far graced our pages.

Among the crowd of poets who commenced writers for the stage during the dramatic lifetime of Shakspeare, and who were peculiarly disciples of the same school, we have now, in our opinion, noticed the most eminent; and if we add to the list, the names of Tailor, Tomkis, and Tourneur, the first the author of "The Hog hath lost his Pearl," the second of "Albumazar," and the third of "The Revenger's Tragedy," "The Atheist's Tragedy," and "The Nobleman," productions in which some very beautiful passages are to be found, and some entire scenes of great merit, we shall not probably be charged with the omission of any thing which could materially serve to heighten our idea of this unrivalled period of the romantic drama. Beyond the limits, indeed, to which we are confined, one great name, that of Shirley, meriting, in many respects, the celebrity which now accompanies the memory of Massinger and Fletcher, would require particular attention; but we must hasten to conclude this branch of the subject, by a simple enumeration, in alphabetical order, of those who, in any degree, contributed to fill the school of Shakspeare whilst its founder was in existence:—Armin, Robert; Barnes, Barnaby; Barry, Lodowick; Bird, William; Borne, William; Boyle, William; Brandon, Samuel; Brewer, Anthony; Campion, Thomas; Carey, Elizabeth; Chettle, Henry; Cook, John; Dauborn, Robert; Day, John; Downton, Thomas; Drayton, Michael; Field, Nathaniel; Goff, Thomas; Hathway, Richard; Haughton, William; Hawkins, —; Jubey, William; Machin, Lewis; Massey, Charles; Mason, John; Munday, Anthony; Pett, —; Porter, Henry; Rankins, William; Ridley, Samuel; Robinson, —; Rowley, Samuel; Sharpman, Edward; Shawe, Robert; Singer, John; Slaughter, Martin; Smith, William; Smith, Wentworth; Stephens, John; Taylor, John; Wadeson, Anthony; Wilkins, George; Wilson, Robert; and Wilson, —.†

In this long list, the only name of celebrity is that of Michael Drayton, and it is a circumstance very extraordinary, and much to be regretted, that, although we find, from the manuscripts of Dulwich College, this great poet had written an

* In his Dedication to the Spanish Fryer.

† This writer is mentioned by Meres in 1598, and praised for his skill in comedy,

entire play, under the title of "William Longsword," and had contributed towards the composition of not less than twenty others, whilst we learn, at the same time, from Meres, that he was well known as a writer of tragedy, not a particle of his authenticated poetry, in this province, should have reached posterity.

After this concise view of the contemporaries of Shakspeare, whom we conceive to have in general adopted, either tacitly or avowedly, and with an approximation nearly proportioned to their talents, the style and structure of his drama, we have now to bring forward the mighty leader of another school, which, if not equally excellent with that established by Shakspeare, possesses the most undoubted originality, and, in its peculiar walk, a degree of merit which neither in its own day, nor in any subsequent period, has encountered any successful rivalry. To this description is it necessary to add the name of BEN JONSON?

Some attempts at a more classical construction of our drama had been made about the period when Jonson began to write: Daniel, for instance, had published his "Cleopatra," in 1594, after the models of antiquity, and Alexander, Earl of Stirling, printed, in 1603 and 1604, his *Monarchic Tragedies*, in which a regular chorus is introduced; but these were abortive efforts, unsupported by the requisite abilities for dramatic composition, and it remained for Jonson to impress upon his own age, and upon posterity, the conviction that an equally correct form of art might be combined with some of the striking excellencies of the Romantic school.

It is probable that when Jonson first began to write for the theatre, which we find, from Mr. Henslowe's memorandums, was as early as 1593, and in conjunction with Decker, Marston, Chettle, etc., he conformed himself to their mode of composition; but no sooner had he ventured on the stage with a comedy exclusively his own, than he aspired to the establishment of a Dramatic Literature in this province, which, while it should adhere to the structure of the classical model, might exhibit various and extensive views of human nature, and uniformly have for its object the correction of vice and folly through the medium of unsparing satire.

Success, in a very extraordinary degree, accompanied this first adventure of laudable ambition, which, under the title of *Every Man in his Humour* made its appearance, at The Rose theatre, in 1596, and, with material alterations and improvements, at The Globe, in 1598. This was followed, at various periods, and almost to the very close of his life, by thirteen more pieces in the same department, of which ten are comedies, and the remaining three, as their author chose to designate them, comical satires.

That these productions, though in the line peculiarly adapted to his genius, should be equally excellent, it would be extravagant to expect. The best, and, we may add, the most incomparable in their kind, are the play just mentioned, "Volpone, or The Fox," "Epicæne, or The Silent Woman," and "The Alchemist." As much inferior to these, but yet possessed of considerable merit, we may next enumerate "The Case is Altered," "The Devil is an Ass," and "The Staple of News;" and lastly, though not devoid of interesting and well-written passages, "Bartholomew Fair," "The New Inn," "The Magnetic Lady," and "A Tale of a Tub." The comical satires, entitled "Every Man out of his Humour," "Cynthia's Revels," and "The Poetaster," are, especially the last, composed in a tone of indignant strength; and, as their appellation might lead us to suppose, are personal and severe; but probably not more so than the occasion warranted.

The fair fame of Jonson which, both in a moral and dramatic light, has, for more than a century, been overwhelmed by a cloud of ignorance and prejudice, now brightens with more than pristine lustre, through the liberal and generous efforts of some accomplished scholars of the present day; and if ever it be permitted to departed spirits to witness the transactions of this sublunary sphere, with what delight and gratitude must the spirit of the injured bard look down

upon the labours of his learned friends, upon the noble and disinterested protection of a Gilchrist, a Godwin, and a Gifford !

Under such circumstances, and with such a triumvirate in his support, it were needless, and, indeed, it were unjust, to do more than repeat in this place their own summary of his merit as a comic poet, to which we will now add, once for all, however unimportant it may be, the expression of our conviction of the general justness of their sentiments with regard to his writings, and of the unanswerable nature of their defence with regard to his moral character ; a tribute which we are, beyond measure, gratified in paying, as whilst they have impartially brought forward the great talents of Jonson, they have paid a full and frank acknowledgment to the superior comprehensiveness of the genius of Shakspeare ; and have, at the same time, placed in a striking point of view the steady friendship which subsisted between these two luminaries of the dramatic world.

It is, however, only with the literary character of Jonson that we are now occupied ; and on the topic immediately before us, the consideration of his comic powers, Mr. Godwin has cursorily, but very justly, remarked, that

“ These, perhaps, compose his strongest claim to the admiration of all posterity. He excels every writer that ever existed, in the article of humour ; and it is a sort of identical proposition to say, that humour is the soul of comedy. Even the caustic severity of his turn of mind aided him in this. He seized with the utmost precision the weaknesses of human character, and painted them with a truth that is altogether irresistible. Shakspeare has some characters of humour marvellously felicitous. But the difference between these two great supporters of the English drama, in the point of view we are considering, lies here. Humour is not Shakspeare’s mansion, the palace wherein he dwells ; there are many of his comedies, where the humorous characters rather form the episode of the piece ; poetry, the manifestation of that lovely medium through which all creation appeared to his eye, and the quick sallies of repartee, are the objects with which his comic muse more usually delights herself. But Ben Jonson is all humour ; and the fertility of his muse, in characters of this sort, is wholly inexhaustible.” *

With a fuller elucidation of the subject, which laid more directly before him, Mr. Gifford, after commenting on the inutility of the common practice of contrasting the two poets, and after observing that “ Shakspeare wants no light but his own ; ‘for’ as he never has been equalled, and in all human probability never will be equalled, it seems an invidious employ, at best, to speculate minutely on the precise degree in which others fell short of him,” proceeds to state, that “ the judgment of Jonson was correct and severe, and his knowledge of human nature extensive and profound. He was familiar with the various combinations of the humours and affections, and with the nice and evanescent tints by which the extremes of opposing qualities melt into one another, and are lost to the vulgar eye : but the art which he possessed in perfection, was that of marking in the happiest manner the different shades of the same quality, in different minds, so as to discriminate the voluptuous from the covetous, the covetous from the covetous, etc.

“ In what Hurd calls ‘ picturing,’ he was excellent. His characters are delineated with a breadth and vigour, as well as a truth, that display a master hand ; his figures stand prominent on the canvas, bold and muscular, though not elegant ; his attitudes, though sometimes ungraceful, are always just ; while his strict observation of proportion (in which he was eminently skilled,) occasionally mellowed the hard and rigid tone of his colouring, and by the mere force of symmetry, gave a warmth to the whole, as pleasing as it was unexpected. Such, in a word, was his success, that it may be doubted whether he has been surpassed, or even equalled, by any of those who have attempted to tread in his steps.

“ In the plots of his comedies, which were constructed from his own materials, he is deserving of undisputed praise. Without violence ; without, indeed, any visible effort, the various events of the story are so linked together, that they have the appearance of accidental introduction ; yet

* Jonson’s Works by Gifford, vol. i. p. ccxcix, ccc.

they all contribute to the main design, and support that just harmony which alone constitutes a perfect fable. Such, in fact, is the rigid accuracy of his plans, that it requires a constant, and almost painful attention, to trace out their various bearings and dependencies. Nothing is left to chance : before he sat down to write, he had evidently arranged every circumstance in his mind ; preparations are made for incidents which do not immediately occur, and hints are dropped, which can only be comprehended at the unravelling of the piece. The play does not end with Jonson, because the fifth act is come to a conclusion ; nor are the most important events precipitated, and the most violent revolutions of character suddenly effected, because the progress of the story has involved the poet in difficulties from which he cannot otherwise extricate himself. This praise, whatever be its worth, is enhanced by the rigid attention paid to the unities ; to say nothing of those of place and character, that of time is so well observed in most of his comedies, that the representation occupies scarcely an hour more on the stage, than the action would require in real life." *

Mr. Gifford then goes on to explain, why Jonson, "with such extraordinary requisites for the stage, joined to a strain of poetry always manly, frequently lofty, and sometimes sublime," should not have retained his popularity ; accounting for this result by the assignment of three causes, of which the first was, his dismissing "the grace and urbanity which mark his lighter pieces whenever he approached the stage, putting on the censor with the sock ;" the second sprung from the circumstance, that "Jonson was the painter of humours, not of passions," and aiming less to excite laughter in his hearers, "than to feast their understanding, and minister to their rational improvement," he frequently brought forward unamiable and uninteresting characters, pests which he wished to extirpate from society, not only by rendering them ridiculous, but by exhibiting them in an odious and disgusting light ; and the third was, "a want of just discrimination. He seems to have been deficient," observes Mr. Gifford, "in that true tact or feeling of propriety which Shakspeare possessed in full excellence. He appears to have had an equal value for all his characters, and he labours upon the most unimportant, and even disagreeable of them, with the same fond and paternal assiduity which accompanies his happiest efforts." † This laboured and indiscriminate finishing may be termed, indeed, one of the prominent characteristics of Jonson's composition ; and has, perhaps, more than any thing else, contributed to obscure his reputation.

The genius of Jonson seems to have forsaken him, when he touched the tragic chords. Neither pity nor terror answered to his call, and "Sejanus" and "Catiline" are valuable, principally, for their correct, though cold and hard, delineations of Roman character and costume. It is remarkable, that, in the construction of these tragedies, Jonson has deserted his Athenian masters, and, adopting the license of the Romantic school, he has laid aside the unities of time and place ; but without acquiring that breadth and freedom in the execution of his subjects, with which such deviations ought to have been accompanied.

The devotion of the poet to this high department of his art was not confined, however, to these two Roman dramas ; he had planned a tragedy on the Fall of Mortimer, of which only a small fragment remains ; and we find, from the Dulwich Manuscripts, that, the year preceding the first performance of Sejanus, he had actually been engaged in writing a play on the subject of Richard the Third :—"Lent unto Benjemy Johstone," says Henslowe's memorandum, "at the appoyntment of E. Alleyn and Wm. Birde the 22 June, 1602, in earnest of a boocke called Richard Crook-back, and for new adycions for Jeronymo, the some of xlb." The Richard of Jonson, and the Macbeth of Milton !—would that time had spared the one and witnessed the execution of the other ! How delightful, how interesting might have been the labour of comparison !

If Jonson failed, as he must be allowed to have done, in communicating pathos and interest to his tragic productions, he has made us ample amends by the unrivalled excellence of his numerous Masques, a species of dramatic poetry, to which

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs of Jonson, p. ccxii.—ccxv.

† *Ibid.* p. ccxvi.—ccxix.

he, and he alone, put the seal of perfection. Here his imagination, which, in the peculiar line of comedy he cultivated, had but little scope for expansion, and was, in his tragedies, altogether repressed, by an undeviating adhesion to the letter of history, expatiated as in its native element. "No sooner," remarks Mr. Gifford, "has he taken down his lyre, no sooner touched on his lighter pieces, than all is changed as if by magic, and he seems a new person. His genius awakes at once, his imagination becomes fertile, ardent, versatile, and excursive; his taste pure and elegant; and all his faculties attuned to sprightliness and pleasure." *

No greater honour, however, has been paid to the memory of Jonson, than the proof which Mr. Godwin has brought forward of his being the favourite author of Milton, "the predecessor that he chiefly had in his eye, and whom he seems principally to resemble in his style of composition." † Among the numerous passages by which he has substantiated this fact, none are more conspicuous than those that breathe the spirit of the lyrical portion of the Masques; for "Milton," as he observes, "will certainly be found to have studied his compositions in this kind more assiduously than those of any of his contemporaries.—It would be strange indeed, if the poet, who in early youth composed the Mask of Comus, had not diligently studied the writings of Ben Jonson." ‡ Can there be a test of merit more indisputable than this? for "Comus," though by no means faultless as a Masque, has to boast of a poetry more rich and imaginative than is to be found in any other composition, save The Tempest of Shakspeare.

"It is not, however," proceeds Mr. Godwin, "in lighter and incidental matters only, that Milton studied the great model afforded him by Jonson: we may find in him much that would almost tempt us to hold opinion with Pythagoras, and to believe that the very spirit and souls of some men became transfused into their poetical successors. The address of our earlier poet to the two universities, prefixed to his most consummate performance, the comedy of "The Fox," will strike every reader familiar with the happiest passages of Milton's prose, with its wonderful resemblance.—They were both of them emphatically poets who had sounded the depths, and formed themselves in the school, of classic lore.

"The difference between 'them' may perhaps best be illustrated from the topic of religion. They had neither of them one spark of libertine and latitudinarian unbelief. But Jonson was not, like Milton, penetrated with his religion. It is to him a sort of servitude—it is not the principle that actuates, but the check that controls him. But in Milton, it is the element in which he breathes, a part of his nature. He acts, 'as ever in his Great Task-master's eye:' and this is not his misfortune; but he rejoices in his condition, that he has so great, so wise, and so sublime a Being, to whom to render his audit." *

The labours of Jonson closed with a species of dramatic poetry in which he had made no previous attempt, and we have only to regret that it was left in an un-

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, p. ccxxx. After the passage which we have inserted in [the text, follow these admirable observations:—

"Such were the Masques of Jonson, in which, as Mr. Malone says, 'the wretched taste of those times found amusement.' That James and his court delighted in them cannot be doubted, and we have only to open the Memoirs of Winwood and others to discover with what interest they were followed by the nobility of both sexes. Can we wonder at this? There were few entertainments of a public kind at which they could appear, and none in which they could participate. Here all was worthy of their hours of relaxation. Mythologues of classic purity, in which, as Hurd observes, the soundest moral lessons came recommended by the charm of numbers, were set forth with all the splendour of royalty, while Jones and Lanier, and Lawes and Ferrabosco, lavished all the grace and elegance of their respective arts on the embellishment of the entertainment.

"But in what was 'the taste of the times wretched?' In poetry, painting, architecture, they have not since been equalled; in theology, and moral philosophy, they are not even now surpassed; and it ill becomes us, who live in an age which can scarcely produce a Bartholomew Fair farce, to arraign the taste of a period which possessed a cluster of writers, of whom the meanest would now be esteemed a prodigy. And why is it assumed that the followers of the court of James were deficient in what Mr. Malone is pleased to call taste? To say nothing of the men (who were trained to a high sense of decorum and intellectual discernment under Elizabeth), the Veres, the Wroths, the Bedfords, the Rutlands, the Cliffords, and the Arundels, who danced in the fairy rings, in the gay and gallant circles of these enchanting devices, of which our most splendid shows are, at best, but beggarly parodies, were fully as accomplished in every internal and external grace as those who, in our days, have succeeded to their names and honours."—Memoirs, p. ccxxx.

† Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. p. ccxcvii.

§ Ibid. vol. i. p. cccvii.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. cciii—cccv.

finished state; for had the "Sad Shepherd" been completed in the style of excellence in which it was commenced, it would have been superior not only to the "Faithful Shepherdess" of Fletcher, but perhaps to any thing which he himself had written.

When Jonson, in his noble and generous eulogium on Shakspeare, tells us, that

"He was not of an age, but for all time,"

he seized a characteristic of which the reverse, in some degree, applies to himself; for had he paid less attention to the *minutiæ* of his own age, and dedicated himself more to universal habits and feelings, his popularity would have nearly equalled that of the poet whom he loved and praised. Yet his fame rests on a broad and durable foundation, and we point, with pride and triumph, to that matchless constellation of dramatic merit, where burn, with inextinguishable glory, the mighty names of SHAKSPEARE, JONSON, FLETCHER, MASSINGER.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Biography of Shakspeare continued to the Close of his Residence in London.

VARIOUS particulars relative to the personal history of Shakspeare, in addition to those which terminated his biography in the country, having been detailed in the chapters that record his commencement as an actor, * the composition of his poems, † and his first efforts as a dramatic writer, ‡ we have now to collect the few circumstances of his life which time has spared to us, during the most active season of its duration, resuming our narrative at a period when the capital was under considerable alarm from the prevalence of the plague, and from the numerous conspiracies which were entered into against the life of the Queen. Shakspeare had been exposed, during the year of his birth, to great risk from the plague at Stratford, and its recurrence in 1593 seems to have made so deep an impression upon him, that he has alluded to it in more than one of his plays; particularly in his *Romeo and Juliet* written in this very year, where he mentions the practice of sealing up the doors of houses, in which, "the infectious pestilence did reign." § It is probable that the effect on his mind might have been rendered more powerful, by the recollected narrative of those who had tended his infancy, and who, no doubt, had often told him of the danger which threatened the dawn of his existence.

We have found that, on his arrival in London, his first employment was that of an actor, a profession which, we certainly know, he continued to exercise for, at least, seventeen years. That he was by no means partial, however, to this occupation, nay, that he bitterly regretted the necessity which compelled him to have recourse to it, as a mode of procuring subsistence, may be fairly deduced from the language of his ninety-first sonnet:—

"O for my sake do you with fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds," &c.

It appears strongly indeed, from the best of all evidence, that of his own words, that his early progress in life was thwarted by many obstacles, and accompanied by severe struggles, by poverty, contumely, and neglect. This he has emphatically told us, not only in one, but in several places, and in terms so expressive as

* Vide Part. II. Chap. 1.

† Part II. Chap. 2 & 5.

‡ Part II. Chap. 9.

§ Act v. sc. 2. See also *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act. ii. sc. 1.

to make us sympathize acutely with his sorrows. Yet we perceive him bearing up under his difficulties with a noble and independent spirit, and contrasting the world's oppression with the solace of private friendship. Thus, in that beautiful sonnet, the twenty-ninth, which has been noticed in another place, the transition from despair to hope is finely painted:—

“ When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my out-cast state,” &c.

and again, in sonnet the thirty-seventh,—

“ As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,” &c.

That, by the salutary though severe lessons of adversity, he had learnt to conquer his misfortunes, and to despise the shafts of vulgar scandal, will be evident from the two subsequent passages:

“ Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;
Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss :
Ah ! do not, when my heart hath scap'd this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe.”

Sonnet 90.

“ Your love and pity doth the impression fill
Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow ;
For what care I who calls me well or ill,
So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow ?—
In so profound abysm I throw all care
Of other's voices, that my adders sense
To critic and to flatterer stopped are.”

Sonnet 112.

These complaints and consolations were, no doubt, written during the first *ten* years of his residence in London, while his reputation, as a poet, was yet assailable, and while the patronage of Lord Southampton was his only shield against the jealousy and traduction of illiberal competitors, whether off or on the stage. But the fame arising from his poems, and from the dramas of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Richard the Third*, had, in 1596, most assuredly secured him from any apprehensions of permanent injury ; more especially as, soon after this period, the encouragement and support of William, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, who, as the players tell us, in their dedication of the first folio, “ had prosecuted our poet's plays, and their author living, with so much favour,” were added to the protecting influence of Southampton.

It was in this year, namely 1596, that Shakspeare's feelings as a father were put to a severe trial, by the loss of his only son Hamnet, who died in the month of August, at the age of twelve—a deprivation which, however sustained with fortitude, must have been long deplored.

He was now residing, it would appear from evidence referred to by Mr. Malone,* near the Bear-Garden in Southwark, and in the following year (1597) purchased of William Underhill, Esquire, one of the best houses in his native town of Stratford, which, having repaired and improved, he denominated New Place.†

* See his “Inquiry,” p. 215.

† Of this mansion, which Dugdale informs us was originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton in the time of Henry the Seventh, and was then “a fair-house, built of brick and timber,” and continued in the Clopton family until 1563, when it was purchased by William Bott, and resold in 1570 to William Underhill, Esq., Mr. Wheler has given us the following account, subsequent to the decease of our poet:—“On Shakspeare's death, it came to his daughter Mrs. Hall, for her life ; and then to her only child Elizabeth, afterwards Lady Barnard ; after whose death New Place was sold, in 1675, to Sir Edward Walker, Knt. Garter, King at Arms, who died the 20th of February, 1676-7 ; and under his Will, dated the 29th of June, 1676, it came to his only child, Barbara, the wife of Sir John Clopton, Knt. of Clopton, in this parish. Their younger son, Sir Hugh Clopton, Knt. a barrister at law, and one of the heralds at arms, afterwards became possessed of New Place, which he modernised by internal and external alterations ; and in 1742, enter-

Whether this was the purchase in which he is said to have been so materially assisted by Lord Southampton, cannot positively be affirmed; but as he had not long emerged from his difficulties, it is highly probable that on this, as well as on subsequent occasions, he was indebted to the bounty of his patron.*

To the year 1598 has been commonly assigned the commencement of the intimacy between our author and Ben Jonson. This epoch rests upon the authority of Mr. Rowe, who informs us, that

“Shakspeare’s acquaintance with Ben Jonson began with a remarkable piece of humanity and good-nature. Mr. Jonson, who was at that time altogether unknown to the world, had offered one of his plays to the players to have it acted; and the persons into whose hands it was put, after having turned it carelessly and superciliously over, was just upon the point of returning it to him with an ill-natured answer, that it would be of no service to their company, when Shakspeare luckily cast his eye upon it, and found something so well in it, as to engage him first to read it through, and afterwards to recommend Mr. Jonson and his writings to the public.”

That this kind office was in perfect unison with the general character of Shakspeare, will readily be admitted, yet there is much reason to believe that the whole account is without foundation; for, as we have related, in the last chapter, “*Every Man in his Humour*,” which is supposed by all the editors and commentators to be the play alluded to by Rowe, was first performed at the Rose theatre; and

“That Jonson was ‘altogether unknown to the world,’ ” remarks Mr. Gifford, “is a palpable untruth. At this period,” (1598) he continues, “Jonson was as well known as Shakspeare, and perhaps better. He was poor indeed, and very poor, and a mere retainer of the theatres; but he was intimately acquainted with Henslowe and Alleyn, and with all the performers at their houses. He was familiar with Drayton and Chapman, and Rowley, and Middleton, and Fletcher; he had been writing for three years, in conjunction with Marston, and Decker, and Chettle, and Porter, and Bird, and with most of the poets of the day: he was celebrated by Meres as one of the principal writers of tragedy; and he had long been rising in reputation as a scholar and a poet among the most distinguished characters of the age. At this moment he was employed on “*Every Man out of his Humour*,” which was acted in 1599, and, in the elegant dedication of that comedy to the ‘Gentlemen of the Inns of Court,’ he says, ‘When I wrote this poem, I had friendship with divers in your Societies, who, as they were great names in learning, so were they no less examples of living. Of them and then, that I say no more, it was not despised.’—And yet, Jonson was,

tained Macklin, Garrick, and Dr. Delany, under Shakspeare’s mulberry tree. By Sir Hugh’s son-in-law and executor, Henry Talbot, Esq. brother to the Lord Chancellor Talbot, it was sold to the Rev. Francis Gastrell, vicar of Frodsham in Cheshire; who, if we may judge by his actions, felt no sort of pride or pleasure in this charming retirement, no consciousness of his being possessed of the sacred ground which the muses had consecrated to the memory of their favourite poet. The celebrated mulberry-tree planted by Shakspeare’s hand became first an object of his dislike, because it subjected him to answer the frequent importunities of travellers, whose zeal might prompt them to visit it, and to hope that they might meet inspiration under its shade. In an evil hour, the sacrilegious priest ordered the tree, then remarkably large, and at its full growth, to be cut down; which was no sooner done, than it was cleft to pieces for fire-wood: this took place in 1756, to the great regret and vexation, not only of the inhabitants, but of every admirer of our bard. The greater part of it was, however, soon after purchased by Mr. Thomas Sharp, watch-maker, of Stratford; who, well acquainted with the value set upon it by the world, turned it much to his advantage, by converting every fragment into small boxes, goblets, tooth-pick cases, tobacco-stoppers, and numerous other articles. Nor did New Place long escape the destructive hand of Mr. Gastrell; who, being compelled to pay the monthly assessments towards the maintenance of the poor (some of which he expected to avoid, because he resided part of the year at Lichfield, though his servants continued in the house at Stratford during his absence), in the heat of his anger declared, *that* house should never be assessed again; and to give his imprecation due effect, and wishing, as it seems, to be “damned to everlasting fame,” the demolition of New Place soon followed; for, in 1759, he rased the building to ground, disposed of the materials, and left Stratford amidst the rage and curses of its inhabitants. Thus was the town deprived of one of its principal ornaments, and most valued relics, by a man, who, had he been possessed of a true sense, and a veneration for the memory of our bard, would have rather preserved whatever particularly concerned their great and immortal owner, than ignorantly have trodden the ground which had been cultivated by the greatest genius in the world, without feeling those emotions which naturally arise in the breast of the generous enthusiast.

“The site of New Place was afterwards added to the adjoining garden, by its illiberal proprietor; under whose Will, made on the 2d of October, 1768, it came to his widow, Mrs Jane Gastrell; who, in 1775, sold it to William Hunt, Esq. late of this town; from whose family it was purchased by Messrs. Battersbee and Morris, bankers, of Stratford.”—Wheeler’s History of Stratford, p. 135; and Guide to Stratford, p. 45, 47.

* It is more probable that he was assisted on various occasions by His Lordship, than that the large sum, mentioned by tradition, was bestowed at once, and at a period, too, when it was less required.

at this time, 'altogether unknown to the world!' and offered a virgin comedy (which had already been three years on the stage) to a player in the humble hope that it might be accepted." *

The presumption is, that our poet and Jonson were acquainted anterior to 1598, probably as early as 1595, and that the dramatic reputation of Ben was the chief motive which induced the company at the Black Friars to procure the alterations in, and to secure the property of, *Every Man in his Humour*. Such even is the opinion of Mr. Malone himself, when he has once forgotten the preposterous charge of ingratitude, on the part of Jonson, for this imaginary introduction to the stage by Shakspeare; for in a note, on an entry of Mr. Henslowe's, which runs thus: — "11 of Maye 1597, at the comedy of umers (humours) 11," that is, acted eleven times since November, 1596, he observes, — "Perhaps Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*." It will appear hereafter, that he had money dealings with Mr. Henslowe, the manager of this theatre, and that he wrote for him. The play might have been afterwards purchased from this company by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants (that is, by Shakspeare, Burbage, Heminge, etc.) by whom it was acted in 1598; an inconsistency which has been keenly and justly animadverted upon by Mr. Gifford. †

Two domestic circumstances mark the next year of our author's life; for, in 1599, his father obtained from the Heralds' Office a confirmation of his Coat of Arms, and his sister Joan married Mr. William Hart, a hatter in Stratford, occurrences which, in the great dearth of events unfortunately incident to our subject, are of some importance.

If an inference, however, made by Sir John Sinclair, could be considered as legitimately drawn, this year might be esteemed one of the most important in the poet's life; for, in the twentieth volume of his *Statistical Account of Scotland*, when speaking of the local traditions respecting Macbeth's castle at Dunsinnan, he infers, from their coincidence with the drama, that Shakspeare, "in his capacity of actor, travelled to Scotland in 1599, and collected on the spot materials for the exercise of his imagination."

"Every attempt," remarks Mr. Stoddart, who has introduced this anecdote into his interesting *Tour*, "to illustrate the slightest circumstance concerning such a mind, deserves our gratitude; but in this instance, conjecture seems to have gone its full length, if not to have overstepped the modesty of nature. The probability of Shakspeare's ever having been in Scotland, is very remote. It should seem, by his uniformly accenting the name of this spot Dunsinane, that he could not possibly have taken it from the mouths of the country-people, who as uniformly accent it Dunsinnan. Every one knows, with what ease local tradition is so modified, as to suit public history; and it is probable, that what Sir John heard in 1772, was a superstructure raised upon the drama itself. Amid the blaze of Shakspeare's genius, small praise is lost; but it is, perhaps, more honourable to his intellectual energies to suppose, that so much minute information was collected from books, or from conversation, than from an actual acquaintance with the place." †

Though we by no means contend for the validity of the inference, yet we must observe, that one of the principal objections of Mr. Stoddart is unfounded; for Shakspeare certainly was familiar with both modes of pronunciation, and has given us a specimen of the popular accent in the following well-known passage: —

"Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him."

Neither do we think, that his genius would have suffered any deterioration, nor his drama any loss of interest, had he actually painted from local observation. §

If we be correct in attributing *Much Ado about Nothing* to the year 1599, it is

* Gifford's *Jonson*, vol. i. *Memoirs*, p. xliii. xlv. — Shakspeare, whose name stands at the head of the principal performers in *Every Man in his Humour*, is supposed to have acted the part of Knowell.

† Gifford's *Jonson*, vol. i. p. cclxxix.

‡ *Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland*, 8vo. vol. ii. p. 197, 198.

§ It is a remarkable circumstance, however, that James is said, during this very year (1599), to have solicited Queen Elizabeth to send a company of English comedians to Edinburgh.

here that some notice should be taken of an anecdote recorded by Aubrey, who, meaning to allude to the character of Dogberry in this play, though by mistake he refers to the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, says, that "the humour of the constable he (Shakspeare) happened to take at Grendon, in Bucks, which is the roade from London to Stratford, and there was living that constable about 1542, when I first came to Oxon. Mr. Jos. Howe is of that parish, and knew him. Ben Jonson and he did gather humours of men dayly, wherever they came."*

That Shakspeare was accustomed to visit Stratford annually, has been already noticed;† and we learn from Antony Wood, that in performing these journeys, he used to bait at the Crown-Inn, in Oxford, which was then kept by John Davenant, the father of the poet. Antony represents Mrs. Davenant as both beautiful and accomplished, and her husband as a lover of plays, and a great admirer of Shakspeare. The frequent visits of the bard, and the charms of his landlady, appear to have given birth to some scandalous surmises; for Oldys, repeating Wood's story, adds, on the authority of Betterton and Pope, that "their son, young Will. Davenant (afterwards Sir William), was then a little school-boy in the town, of about seven or eight years old, and so fond also of Shakspeare, that whenever he heard of his arrival, he would fly from school to see him. One day, an old townsman observing the boy running homeward almost out of breath, asked him whither he was posting in that heat and hurry. He answered, to see his god-father Shakspeare. There's a good boy, said the other, but have a care that you don't take God's name in vain." It has also been said, that Sir William had the weakness to feel gratified by the publicity of the supposition.

It is very probable that, in 1600, Shakspeare might so time his annual visit to Stratford, as to be present at the christening of his nephew, William Hart, his sister's eldest son; who, according to the Register, was baptized on the 28th of the August of this year, and who, together with his two brothers, Thomas and Michael, is remembered in the poet's will, by a legacy of five pounds.

The subsequent year exhibits our bard in great favour at court. The Queen had been delighted with the *Two Parts of Henry the Fourth*, and honoured their author with a command to bring forward *Falstaff* in another play. Tradition says this was executed in a fortnight, and afforded Her Majesty the most entire satisfaction. The approbation and encouragement, indeed, of the two sovereigns under whose reigns he flourished, was a subject of contemporary notoriety; for Jonson, in his celebrated eulogy, thus apostrophises his departed friend:—

" Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were,
To see thee in our waters yet appear:
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take *Eliza*, and our *James*."

That Elizabeth "gave him many gracious marks of her favour," has been mentioned by Rowe as a matter of no doubt; and he elsewhere observes, that "what grace soever the Queen conferred upon him, it was not to her only he owed the fortune which the reputation of his wit made;" an observation which ushers in the acknowledgment of Southampton's well-known generosity.

The pleasure arising from this tide of success must have been, in no slight degree, damped by the sorrow which a son so truly great and good, must have felt on the loss of his father. This worthy man, of whom, in the opening of our work, some account will be found, expired on the 8th of September, 1601, leaving a name immortalised by the celebrity of his offspring.

In 1602, no other trace of our author is discoverable, independent of his literary exertions, than that, on the 1st day of May, he purchased, in the town and parish of Stratford, one hundred and seven acres of land, for the sum of 320*l.*, which lands appear to have been indissolubly connected with his former purchase of New

* Bodleian Letters, vol. iii. p. 307.

† Vide Part II. Chapter I.

Place, and to have descended with it, until the extinction of the latter by Mr. Gastrell.*

The year following, however, brought an accession of dignity and power; for no sooner had James gotten possession of the English throne, than he granted a License to the Company at the Globe, which bears date the 19th of May, 1603, and being entitled "Pro Laurentio Fletcher et Willielmo Shakspeare et aliis," gives us reason to conclude, that the persons thus distinguished were, if not joint managers, at least leaders in the concern. †

It was about this period also that Shakspeare may, upon good grounds, be supposed to have taken his farewell of the stage as an actor; relinquishing this profession, of which he appears not to have been very fond, for the purpose of more closely superintending the general concerns of the theatre, of which his writings continued to be the chief support. One strong motive for this deduction has arisen from the circumstance, that his name, as a performer, is no where visible beyond the era of Jonson's *Sejanus*, in which play, first acted in 1603, it is found in the list of the principal comedians; while in *The Fox*, published only two years afterwards, performed at the same theatre, and by the same company, he is not mentioned, though the list of players is, as usual, inserted. That the term fellow, which continued to be mutually used by Shakspeare and the comedians of the Globe, cannot indicate a contrary conclusion, is evident from the language of the poet himself, who, in his will, though written three years after all connection, on his part, with the theatre had been given up, still speaks of Heminge, Burbage, and Condell as his fellows.

To nearly the same epoch we may attribute the friendly association of Shakspeare and Jonson in the celebrated club at the Mermaid, a form of society to which, from its ease and independency, Englishmen have always been peculiarly partial. The institution in question originated with Sir Walter Raleigh, and, as Mr. Gifford has well observed, speaking of Jonson's resort to it about the year 1603, "combined more talent and genius, perhaps, than ever met together before or since;—here," he adds, "for many years, he (Jonson) regularly repaired with Shakspeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Martin, Donne, and many others, whose names, even at this distant period, call up a mingled feeling of reverence and respect. Here, in the full flow and confidence of friendship, the lively and interesting 'wit-combats' took place between Shakspeare and our author; and hither, in probable allusion to them, Beaumont fondly lets his thoughts wander, in his letter to Jonson, from the country:—

"What things have we seen,
Done at the MERMAID! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest," &c. ‡

For the expression "wit-combats," in this interesting passage, we must refer to Fuller, who, describing the character of the bard of Avon, says: "Many were the wit-combats between Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. I behold them like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man of war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances; Shakspeare, like the latter, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." §

With what delight should we have hung over any well authenticated instances of these "wit-combats!" but, unfortunately, nothing, upon which we can depend, has descended to us. How much is it to be regretted that Fuller, who, no doubt, from the manner in which he has mentioned the subject, had many of these lively

* Wheler's Guide to Stratford upon Avon, p. 18.

† See this License given at length in our History of the Stage, Part II. Chapter 7.

‡ Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, p. lxxv. lxxvi.

§ Worthies, folio edition, p. 126.

sallies fresh in his recollection, has not been more communicative! What tradition, however, or rather, perhaps, what fabrication, has left us, of this kind, will be found in the notes.*

It would appear that Shakspeare was now rapidly accumulating property; he had purchased, we have seen, New Place in 1597, a hundred and seven acres of land in 1602, and in 1605 he became the purchaser of the lease of the moiety of the great and small tithes of Stratford, for the sum of 440*l.*, a pretty strong proof of the success which had accompanied the exercise of his talents, both as an actor and a poet, and a complete one of his having overcome the difficulties which, for some years after his arrival in London, had so oppressively encumbered his efforts.

We may add, that he was gratified this year by the affectionate remembrance of his former associate Augustine Phillips, who, in his Will, proved on the 13th of May, 1605, gives and bequeaths to his "Fellowe Willm Shakespeare a thirty shillings piece in gould."

It was the fashion at this period among the poets, to compliment a monarch, who was peculiarly open to flattery, especially on the subject of his genealogy, and on the union of the three kingdoms in his own person; a species of panegyric in which our author had been preceded by Daniel, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, and

* Were the repartees, however, of which time has deprived us, no better than those that we have now to communicate, it must be confessed, that the two bards have no great reason to complain of the loss. "Shakspeare," relates Capell, "was god-father to one of Ben Jonson's children, and after the christening, being in deep study, Jonson came to cheer him up; and asked him why he was so melancholy? No faith, Ben, says he, not I; but I have been considering a great while what should be the fittest gift for me to bestow upon my god-child, and I have resolved at last. I prithee what, says he? I'faith, Ben, I'll c'en give her a dozen good Latin (latten) spoons, and thou shalt *translate* them."—Notes on Shakspeare, vol. i. p. 94.

The second of these *morceaux* is, if possible, still worse than the preceding: "Mr. Ben Jonson and Mr. William Shakspeare being merrie at a tavern, Mr. Jonson begins this for his epitaph,

" Here lies Ben Jonson
Who was once one—

he gives it to Mr. Shakspeare to make up, who presently write,

" That, while he liv'd was a *slow* thing,
And now, being dead, is *no*-thing."

"This stuff," adds Mr. Gifford, "is copied from the Ashmole MS. 38."—Gifford's Ben Jonson, vol. i. Memoirs, p. lxxx. note.

The next may be said to be rather of a "better leer."

"Verses by Ben Jonson and Shakspeare, occasioned by the motto to the Globe Theatre—*Totus mundus agit histrionem*.

JONSON.

" If, but *stage actors*, all the world displays,
Where shall we find *spectators* of their plays?"

SHAKSPEARE.

" Little, or much, of what we see, we do;
We are all both *actors* and *spectators* too."

"Poetical Characteristics, 8vo. MS. vol. i. some time in the Harleian Library; which volume was returned to its owner."

"That Shakspeare and Ben Jonson were intimate," observes Dr. Berkenhout, "appears from the following letter, written by G. Peel, a dramatic poet, to his friend Marle:—

' Friend Marle,

' I never longed for thy company more than last night; we were all very merrye at the Globe, when Ned Alleyn did not scruple to affyrme pleasantly to thy friend Will, that he had stolen his speeche about the qualities of an actor's excellencye, in Hamlet hys tragedye, from conversations manyfold which had passed between them, and opinyons given by Alleyn touchinge the subject. Shakspeare did not take this talke in good sorte; but Jonson put an end to the strife, wittylie remarking, This affaire needeth no contentione; you stole it from Ned, no doubt; do not marvel: have you not seen him act tymes out of number?

' G. PEEL.'

" Whence I copied this letter, I do not recollect; but I remember that at the time of transcribing it, I had no doubt of its authenticity."—Biographia Literaria, p. 399, 400. 4to. 1777.

I believe the first appearance of this letter was in the Annual Register for 1770, whence it was copied into the Biographia Britannica, and in both these works it commences in the following manner: "I must desyre that my syster hyr watche, and the cookerie book you promysed, may be sente bye the man—I never longed, &c." Of the four, this is the only anecdote worth preserving; but I apprehend it to be a mere forgery.

even by such grave characters as Dugdale and Wake. * It was natural, therefore, for Shakspeare, who had been under some obligation to James, to express his sense of it in a similar way, and he has accordingly, through the medium of his *Macbeth*, which we conceive to have been performed in 1606, represented James as descended from Banquo, a character which, for this purpose, he has drawn, contrary to his historical authorities, noble and blameless. James, as Dr. Farmer thinks, was so delighted with the line which painted him as carrying "twofold balls and treble sceptres," that it was on this occasion he was induced to acknowledge the compliment by a letter to the bard from his own hand; an anecdote which seems entitled to full credit, as it originated, Oldys tells us, with Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, who had it immediately from Sir William D'Avenant, in whose hands the letter long remained.

This year has been also rendered memorable in the biography of our poet by the publication of a drama called "*The Return from Parnassus*," which had been acted by the students of St. John's College, Cambridge, as early as 1602. To a passage in this very curious production is to be ascribed all the idle tales which have been circulated with so much industry and avidity relative to a supposed quarrel between our author and Ben Jonson, in doing which, though the principal object has been to substantiate a charge of envy and malignancy against the latter, the mode in which the attempt is executed has been such as would, were the premises true, reflect no credit on the former. But the whole is a tissue of the most groundless and indefensible scandal, and we stand aghast at the motives which could induce such persevering hostility against the very man who, more than all others, had been the steady and professed eulogist of the poet whom these commentators sally forth to protect.

The passage, however, as equally applicable and important to both these great men, it will be necessary to transcribe. Burbage and Kempe, Shakspeare's fellow-comedians, are introduced conversing about the histrionic powers of the students of Cambridge, the latter ridiculing and the former defending their attempts, by observing, "that a little teaching will mend their faults; and it may be, besides, they will be able to pen a part;" to which Kempe, who seems here an object of irony, replies, —

"Few of the university pen plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why here's our fellow Shakspeare put them (the University poets) all down, ay, and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow; he brought up Horace, giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakspeare has given him a purge that made him bewray his credit."†

"When an object is placed too near to the eye," observes Mr. Gilchrist, commenting on this quotation, "the vision is strained and impaired, and the object obscured or distorted: if the commentators had viewed this passage 'as others use,' they would have found in the numerous dramas published anterior to the above passage, the instruments by which he put Ben down; and, in their various excellence, the means by which he threw the claims of his competitor into the shade. The passage has no reference to personal animosity; it was a just testimony to the superior merit of 'the poet of nature,' over the writings of more 'learned candidates for fame;' and the well-merited compliment is very appropriately put into the mouth of Will Kempe, one of Shakspeare's fellows."‡

It is remarkable, that with the exception of Rowe, who, however, soon retracted the accusation, none of the editors of, and commentators on, Shakspeare had, previous to Steevens, attempted to prove Jonson the libeller of his friend. It remained therefore for his commentators of the last half century to undertake the noble task of heaping a thousand groundless calumnies on the defenceless head of Shakspeare's dearest friend, on him whom he most admired, and by whom he was best beloved! The iteration of these charges, under every form and shape,

* Wake, in his "*Rex Platonicus, sive de potentiis, principis Jacobi regis ad Acad. Oxon. adventu, anno 1605*," speaking of the prophecy of the Weird Sisters, says, "*Vaticinii veritatem rerum eventus comprobavit; Banquonis enim e stirpe potentissimus Jacobus oriundus.*"

† Ancient British Drama, vol. i. p. 64. Act iv. sc. 3.

‡ Gilchrist's Examination, p. 15, 16.

and connected with a commentary rendered popular by the text to which it was appended, had totally poisoned the public mind, when Mr. Gilchrist, and, still more amply, Mr. Gifford, by hunting these gentlemen through all their windings and doublings,* through all the channels to which they had recourse for defamation, have produced a refutation of their charges, and a detection of their practices, more complete, perhaps, than any other instance of the kind on literary record.*

Truly delightful must it be to every lover of Shakspeare and of human nature, to find that the affectionate confidence of our bard was not thrown away, was not placed on a man worthless and insensible of the gift, but was returned by honest Ben, however occasionally rough in his manner and temper, with an attachment amounting to enthusiasm, with a steadiness which neither years nor infirmities could shake. †

On the last day of the year 1607, our poet buried at the church of St. Saviour's Southwark, his brother Edmond, who, with singular precision, is entered in the register of that parish as "Edmond Shakspeare, a player," so that, as Mr. Chalmers has observed, "there were two Shakspeares on the stage during the same period."

He had likewise married, on the fifth of June of this year, his favourite daughter Susanna, to Dr. John Hall, a physician of considerable skill and reputation in his profession, which he exercised at Stratford, residing during his father-in-law's life-time in the old town, but, on his death, removing to New Place, which, with the chief part of his property, had been left by the poet to Mrs. Hall. Susanna was, on her nuptials with Dr. Hall, twenty-five years of age, and there can be little doubt but that her father was present at the celebration of an event so materially affecting the happiness of his child. ‡

It is highly probable, that, independent of his regular annual visit, family-

* One of these refutations, as including a complete detection of the fallacious grounds on which a well-known anecdote relative to Shakspeare and Jonson has been founded, it will be useful as well as entertaining to transcribe.

* "Hales of Eaton," observes Mr. Gifford, "was reported to have said (though the matter was not much in Hales of Eaton's way), 'that there was no subject of which any person ever writ, but he would produce it much better done by Shakspeare,' p. 16.—Shakspeare, vol. i. edit. 1593. This is told by Dryden, 1667. The next version is by Tate, 1680. 'Our learned Hales was wont to assert, that since the time of Orpheus no common place has been touched upon, where Shakspeare has not performed as well.' Next comes the illustrious Gildon (of Dunciad memory), and he models the story thus, from Dryden, as he says, with a salvo for the accuracy of his recollection! 'Mr. Hales of Eaton affirmed, that he would shew all the poets of antiquity outdone by Shakspeare.—The *enemies* of Shakspeare would by no means yield to this; so that it came to a trial of skill. The place agreed on for the dispute was Mr. Hales's chamber at Eton. A great many *books were sent down* by the enemies of this poet, and on the appointed day my lord Falkland, sir John Suckling, and *all the persons of quality* that had wit and learning, met there, and upon a thorough disquisition of the point, the judges chosen out of this assembly unanimously gave the preference to Shakspeare, and the Greek and Roman poets were adjudged to vail at least their glory in that to the English poet.' P. 17.

"The story now reached Rowe; and as it was discovered about this time, that the praise of Shakspeare was worth nothing unless coupled with the abuse of Jonson, it puts on this form. 'Mr. Hales, who had sate still some time, hearing Ben reproach Shakspeare with the want of learning, and ignorance of the ancients, told him, at last.' &c. Thus it stood in the first edition: but Mr. Rowe was an honest man, and having found occasion to change his mind before the appearance of the second edition, he struck the passage out, and inserted in its stead,—'sir John Suckling, who was a professed admirer of Shakspeare, had undertaken, with some warmth, his defence against Ben Jonson, when Mr. Hales,' &c. &c.—

"Thus we have the Fable of the *Three Black Crows*! and thus a simple observation of Mr. Hales (which in all probability he never made), is dramatised, at length, into a scene of obloquy against our author! A tissue of mere dotage scarcely deserves unravelling; but it may be just observed, that when Jonson was seized with his last illness (after which he certainly never went 'to Mr. Hales's chamber, at Eton,' or elsewhere), the two grave judges, Suckling and Falkland, who sat on the merits of all the Greek and Roman poets, and decided with such convincing effect, were, the first in the twelfth, and the second in the fifteenth year of their ages!—But the chief mistake lies with Dryden, whose memory was always subservient to the passions of the day; the words which he has put into the mouth of Mr. Hales being, in fact, the property of Jonson. Long before Suckling and Falkland were out of leading-strings, he had told the world, that Shakspeare surpassed not only all his contemporary poets, but even those of Greece and Rome:—and if Mr. Hales used these words, without giving the credit of them to Jonson, he was, to say the least of it, a bold plagiarist."—Vol. i. p. cclxii.

† "It is my fixed persuasion," says Mr. Gifford (not lightly adopted, but deduced from a wide examination of the subject), that they (Jonson and Shakspeare) were friends and associates till the latter finally retired—that no feud, no jealousy ever disturbed their connection—that Shakspeare was pleased with Jonson, and that Jonson loved and admired Shakspeare."—Vol. i. p. ccli.

‡ Vide Wheler's Guide, p. 27.

occurrences frequently drew Shakspeare from London to the purer atmosphere of his native fields; for, in the year succeeding the marriage of his daughter, two events of this kind took place, of which one required his personal attendance. On the 21st of February, 1608, his granddaughter Elizabeth, daughter of Dr. Hall, was baptized; and, on the 16th of the October following, he stood godfather for William Walker, the son of Henry Walker of Stratford, remembering the child in his will, with twenty shillings in gold, under the title of his "godson William Walker."

The year 1609 is sufficiently commemorated by the general opinion, that, at this period, Shakspeare planted the Mulberry Tree, whose premature fate has been recorded in a preceding note.

"That Shakspeare planted this tree," "observes Mr. Malone, "is as well authenticated as any thing of that nature can be. The Rev. Mr. Davenport informs me, that Mr. Hugh Taylor (the father of his clerk), who is now eighty-five years old and an alderman of Warwick, where he at present resides, says, he lived, when a boy, at the next house to New Place; that his family had inhabited the house for almost three hundred years; that it was transmitted from father to son during the last and the present century; that this tree (of the fruit of which he had often eaten in his younger days, some of its branches hanging over his father's garden), was planted by Shakspeare; and that till this was planted, there was no mulberry-tree in that neighbourhood. Mr. Taylor adds, that he was frequently, when a boy, at New Place, and that this tradition was preserved in the Clopton family, as well as in his own."

That it was planted in the year above-mentioned, seems established by the facts, that, previous to the epoch in question, mulberry-trees, though not absolutely unknown in this country, were extremely scarce; and that, in 1609, King James, with a view to the encouragement of the silk manufacture, imported many hundred thousand of these trees from France, dispersing them all over England, accompanied by circular letters, written to induce the inhabitants to cultivate so useful, and at the same time so ornamental, a production of the vegetable world.

It may safely be inferred, therefore, that our poet, on his visit this year to Stratford, had, in deference to the recommendation of his sovereign, as well as from his own taste and inclination, embellished his garden with this elegant tree.

With the exception of a Writ, issued out of the Stratford Court of Record, in June, 1610, for a small debt due to our author, scarcely a vestige of his existence, apart from his works, can be found for the next three years. This writ, and another issued the preceding year for a similar purpose, have the subjoined signature of Greene, being that of Thomas Greene, Esq., a cousin of the poet's; who, though resident in Stratford, and clerk to its corporation, had at the same time chambers in the Middle Temple, and was a barrister in Chancery. He is entitled to this notice, as being not only the relation, but the intimate friend of Shakspeare.

We now approach the last year of Shakspeare's abode in London, which, there is every reason to suppose, continued to be in that part of it where we found him in 1596; where he assuredly was, according to Malone, in 1608, and where he no doubt remained, until, as a resident, he quitted the capital for ever.* Before he took this step, however, he became the purchaser of a tenement in Blackfriars, for which, according to a deed still extant, he agreed to give one Henry Walker the sum of 140*l.*, of which he paid 80*l.* down, and mortgaged the premises for the remainder. The property acquired by this transaction, which took place on the 10th of March, 1613, is in his will bequeathed to his daughter Susanna, and being there described as "that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London, near the Wardrobe," was probably let to this tenant soon after the purchase.

Among the arrangements which such a change of situation would almost necessarily require, it is reasonable to imagine, that his property in the Globe theatre

* Malone's Inquiry, p. 216.

would not be forgotten; but as this is neither mentioned in his will, nor he himself once noticed in the transactions of the theatre for 1613, we are entitled to infer, that he disposed of his interest in the concern previous to his leaving London.

That this event took place before the close of 1613, in all probability during the summer of the year, not only this circumstance relative to the theatre, and the general tradition, that a few years anterior to his death, he had left the metropolis for "ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends" at Stratford, but two other circumstances of importance, will lead us to conclude. For, in the first place, it has been calculated that, at this period, his income from real and personal property was such, as to enable him to live handsomely in the country, independent of any profit from the stage;* and secondly, we have found sufficient data for believing, that his literary career was terminated by the production of *The Twelfth Night*, and that this play was written in 1613.

These considerations, when united, impress us with a perfect conviction, that when Shakspeare bade adieu to London, he left it predetermined to devote the residue of his days exclusively to the cultivation of social and domestic happiness in the shades of retirement.

* Gildon says that Shakspeare left behind him an estate of 300*l.* per annum, equal to at least 1000*l.* per ann. at this day; but Mr. Malone doubts "whether all his property, real and personal, amounted to much more than 200*l.* per ann. which yet was a considerable fortune in those days. "If," he adds, "we rate the *New Place* with the appurtenances, and our poet's other houses in Stratford, at 60*l.* a year, and his house, &c. in the Blackfriars, (for which he paid 140*l.*) at 20*l.* a year, we have a rent-roll of 150*l.* per ann. Of his personal property it is not now possible to form any accurate estimate; but if we rate it at 500*l.*, money then bearing an interest of 10*l.* per cent. Shakspeare's total income was 200*l.* per ann."

PART III.

SHAKSPEARE IN RETIREMENT.

CHAPTER I.

Anecdotes relative to Shakspeare during his Retirement at Stratford.

YES, high in reputation as a poet, favoured by the great and accomplished, and beloved by all who knew him, Shakspeare, after a long residence in the capital, to the rational pleasures of which he had contributed more than any other individual of his age, at length sought for leisure and repose on the banks of his native stream: perhaps wisely considering, that, as he had acquired a competency adequate to the gratifications of a well-regulated mind, life had other duties to perform, to the discharge of which, while health and vigour should remain, he was now called upon to dedicate a larger portion of his time.

The Genius of dramatic poetry may sigh over a determination thus early taken! but who shall blame what, from our knowledge of the man, we may justly conceive to have been his predominating motive, the hope that in the bosom of rural peace, aloof from the dissipations and seductions of the stage, he might the better prepare for that event which awaits us all, and which talents, such as his were, can only, from the magnitude of the trust, render more awfully responsible.

That he was greatly honoured and respected at Stratford we are induced to credit, not only from tradition, but from the tone and disposition of heart and intellect which his works everywhere evince; and accordingly, Rowe has told us, that "his pleasurable wit and good-nature engaged him in the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood."

He had scarcely, however, settled in the place, when his property, and that of all his neighbours, was threatened with utter extinction; for, on the 9th of July, 1614, a fire broke out in the town, which according to a brief shortly afterwards granted for its relief, "within the space of lesse than two houres consumed and burnt fifty and fowre Dwelling Howses, many of them being very faire Houses, besides Barnes, Stables, and other Howses of Office, together with great Store of Corne, Hay, Straw, Wood and Timber therein, amounting to the value of Eight Thowsand Pounds and upwards: the force of which fier was so great (the Wind sitting full upon the Towne) that it dispersed into so many places thereof, whereby the whole Towne was in very great danger to have been utterly consumed." * Shakspeare's house fortunately escaped.

On the 10th of July, 1614, our author was deprived of his neighbour and acquaintance, Mr. John Combe, a character whose celebrity is altogether founded on the epitaph which Shakspeare is said to have written upon him. The story, however, as related by Rowe, is injurious to the memory of its supposed author, by representing him as wantonly inflicting pain at the moment when his friendship and forbearance were most required. "In a pleasant conversation amongst their common friends," relates Rowe, "Mr. Combe told Shakspeare, in a laughing

* Wheler's History and Antiquities of Stratford, p 15.

manner, that he fancied he intended to write his epitaph, if he happened to out-live him; and since he could not know what might be said of him when he was dead, he desired it might be done immediately; upon which Shakspeare gave him these four verses:—

*'Ten in the hundred lies here engrav'd;
'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd:
If any man ask, who lies in this tomb?
Oh! ho! quoth the Devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe.'*

But the sharpness of the satire is said to have stung the man so severely, that he never forgave it."

That Shakspeare, the gentle and unoffending Shakspeare, as he is always represented, should have violated the hour of confidential gaiety by this sarcastic and condemnatory sally, is of itself sufficiently improbable; but we are happily released from weighing the inconsistencies accompanying such an anecdote, by the discovery of a prior and more authentic statement, which completely exonerates the bard, as it proves that the epitaph in question was written after the death of its object: "One time" as he (Shakspeare) was at the taverne at Stratford," narrates Aubrey, "Mr. Combes, an old usurer, was to be buried; he makes then this extemporary epitaph upon him:—

*'Ten in the hundred the devill allowes,
But Combes will have twelve, he swears and he vowes;
If any one aske, who lies in this tomb,
Hoh! quoth the devill, 'tis my John-a-Combe.'* *

Mr. Combe, who, it appears, was buried two days after his disease,† was by no means a popular character, having amassed considerable wealth, through the medium of usury, a term then uniformly applied to the practice of all who took any interest or usance for money. The custom, though now honourable and familiar, was then deemed so odious, and even criminal, that to be a money-lender, on such a plan, was considered as an indelible reproach.

That Shakspeare, therefore, though intimate with the family, should, after the death of Mr. Combe, have uttered this impromptu (which the reader will observe is in Aubrey, without the condemnatory clause) as a censure on his well-known rapacity, may, without any charge of undue severity on his part, or even any breach of his customary suavity of temper, readily be granted.

It is certain that he continued on good terms with the relatives of the deceased, as in his Will he bequeaths to Mr. Thomas Combe, the nephew of the usurer, his sword, as a token of remembrance.

Nor is this the only epitaph which Shakspeare is said to have written; two others have been ascribed to him, one of which, as being given on the authority of Sir William Dugdale, "a testimony," observes Mr. Malone, "sufficient to ascertain its authenticity," and possessing besides strong internal marks of being genuine, requires admission into our text.

It is written in commemoration of Sir Thomas Stanley, Knight, who died some time after the year 1600, and is thus described by Sir William:—

"On the north side of the chancell (of Tongue church, in the county of Salop) stands a very stately tombe, supported with Corinthian columnes. It hath two figures of men in armour, thereon lying, the one below the arches and columnes, and the other above them, and this epitaph upon it:—

"Thomas Stanley, Knight, second son of Edward Earle of Derby, Lord Stanley and Strange, descended from the famiellie of the Stanleys, married Margaret Vernon of Nether-Hadden, in the county of Derby, Knight, by whom he had issue two sons, Henry and Edward. Henry died an infant; Edward survived, to whom those lordships descended; and married the lady Lucie Percie, second daughter of the Earle of Northumberland: by her he had issue seaven daughters. She and her foure daughters, Arabella, Marie, Alice, and Priscilla, are interred under a monument in

* Letters by Eminent Persons, &c. 1813, vol. iii. p. 307.

† On the 12th of July, 1614.

the church of Waltham, in the county of Essex. Thomas, her son, died in his infancy, and is buried in the parish church of Winwich in the county of Lancaster. The other three, Petronilla, Frances, and Venesia, are yet living.'

"The following verses were made by WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, the late famous tragedian:—

"Written upon the east ende of this tombe.

'ASKE who lies here, but do not weepe;
He is not dead, he doth but sleepe.
This stony register is for his bones,
His fame is more perpetual than these stones:
And his own goodness, with himself being gone,
Shall live, when earthly monument is none.'

"Written upon the west ende thereof.

'Nor monumental stone preserves our fame,
Nor skye-aspiring pyramids our name.
The memory of him for whom this stands,
Shall out-live marble, and defacer's hands.
When all to time's consumption shall be given,
Stanley, for whom this stands, shall stand in heaven.'"^{*}

It has been well remarked by Mr. Malone, that the fifth and last lines of this epitaph "bear very strong marks of the hand of Shakspeare."

As every circumstance relative to our author is, however minute, possessed of interest, the following particulars and conversation concerning a negociation for the enclosure of some land near Stratford in 1614, and which were first communicated to the public by Mr. Wheler, shall be given in that gentleman's own words.

"About the year 1614," he relates, "there was an intention of inclosing Welcombe field, in this parish, where part of Shakspeare's landed property lay, which he had purchased in 1602 of William and John Combe, and over which field the tithes extended, of which he purchased a moiety in 1605. Shakspeare was therefore doubly interested in this inclosure; and from some memorandums of notes commenced in London, but concluded at Stratford, by Thomas Green, Esq. (the owner of part of the tithes, perhaps the other moiety), a relation of Shakspeare's—the following particulars of his conversation with Shakspeare are extracted.

'Rec. 16. No. 1614, at 4 o'clock afr. noon, a Lre. from Mr. Bayly, and Mr. Alderman, (the Bailif and chief Alderman of Stratford-upon-Avon), dated 12. No. 1614, touchyng the inclosure busynes.'

'Jovis 17. No. (1614) My Cosen Shakspeare comyng yesterday to town, I went to see him how he did. He told me that they (the parties wishing to inclose) assured him they ment to inclose no further than to Gospel bush, and so upp straight (leaving out pt. of the Dyngles to the field), to the gate in Clopton hedg and take in Salisbry's peece; and that they mean in Aprill to svey. the land and then to gyve satisfaccion and not before: and he and Mr. Hall, (Shakspeare's son-in-law, probably present) say they think yr. (there) will be nothyng done at all.'

"Mr. Green, (the common clerk to this corporation, who were adverse to the inclosure) returned to Stratford at the latter end of November, or beginning of December, 1614, and continued his notes until the 23d of December; upon which day it appears that letters were written by the corporation to Shakspeare and to Mr. Manwaring, (another proprietor, resident

^{*} "Preserved," says Mr. Malone, "in a collection of Epitaphs, at the end of the Visitation of Salop, taken by Sir William Dugdale in the year 1664, now remaining in the College of Arms, chap. xxxv. fol. 20.; a transcript of which Sir Isaac Heard, Garter principal King at Arms, has obligingly transmitted to me."

The other epitaph alluded to in the text, is from "a Manuscript volume of Poems by William Herrick and others, in the hand-writing of the time of Charles I., among Rawlinson's Collections in the Bodleian Library.

AN EPITAPH.

'When God was pleas'd, the world unwilling yet
Elias James to nature pay'd his debt,
And here repositeth: as he liv'd, he dyde;
The saying in him strongly verifide,—
Such life, such death: then, the known truth to tell,
He liv'd a godly life, and dyde as well. WM. SHAKSPEARE.'"

It appears from Mr. Malone's researches, that the James's were a family living at Stratford both during and after our poet's time.

in London), both of whom seem to have been desirous of inclosing. Mr. Green's memorandum, as far as it can be transcribed, being almost illegible and the paper somewhat damaged, is as follows:—

“ ‘ 23. Dec. (1614.) a Hall. Lres. wrytten, one to Mr. Manyring—another to Mr. Shakspeare, with almost all the company's hands to eyther. I also wrytte myself to my Csn. (Cousin) Shakspear, the coppies of all our . . . then also a note of the inconvenyences wold . . . by the inclosure.’ ”

“ From a copy of the corporation's letter to ‘ Arthur Mannering, Esq.’ (then residing at the Lord Chancellor's house, perhaps in some official capacity) as noticed by Green to have been written on the 23d of December, 1614, it appears that he was apprized of the injury to be expected from the intended inclosure; reminded of the damage that Stratford, then ‘lying in the ashes of desolation,’ had sustained from recent fires; and entreated to forbear the inclosure. The letter written to Shakspeare, the author has not been sufficiently fortunate to discover; but it was probably to the same effect. A petition was presented from the corporation to the Lords of the Privy Council, requesting their injunction to William Combe, Esq. of Stratford College, then High Sheriff of this County; who, being proprietor of considerable estates at Welcombe, was desirous of an inclosure. Nothing, however, was done, as Shakspeare had surmised; and the fields remained open until the year 1774.” *

Early in 1616 our poet married his youngest daughter Judith to Mr. Thomas Quiney, a vintner in Stratford. The ceremony took place on February the 10th, 1616, the bridegroom being four years older than the bride, who had, however, completed her thirty-second year.

The daughters of Shakspeare appear to have been, like those of Milton, ignorant of the art of writing; Judith, at least, in attesting a deed still extant, being under the necessity of making her mark, which is accompanied by the explanatory appendage of “Signum Judeth Shakspeare” †. The omission, however, is less extraordinary in the days of Shakspeare than in those of his great successor; the education of women, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, being in general calculated, with a few splendid exceptions, principally in the upper classes of society, for the discharge of mere domestic duties; and when, to be able to read was considered as a very distinguishing compliment.

The fruit of this marriage was three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Thomas Quiney; the first dying in his infancy, the second in his twenty-first year, and the third in his twentieth year; so that, as Elizabeth, the daughter of Susanna, by Dr. Hall, had no issue by her two husbands, Thomas Nash, Esq. and Sir John Barnard, she proved the last lineal descendant of her grandfather.

It was very shortly after the marriage of Judith, that our author, being in perfect health and memory, deemed it necessary to make his Will; a document which appears to have been drawn up on the 25th of February, 1616, though not executed until the 25th of the following month. ‡

That the event, for which this was a proper preparatory act, should have so rapidly followed, could be little in the contemplation of one who had not reached his fifty-second year, and who, according to his own account, was in perfect health and memory. Yet we may venture to infer, from what tradition has left us of his life and character, that few were better prepared for the transition, that few could be found, over whom, when the event had occurred, with more justice might it be said,—

“After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well!”

* Wheler's Guide to Stratford, p. 22—25.

† Vide Wheler's Guide, p. 21.

‡ “*February*,” says Mr. Malone, “was first written, and afterwards struck out, and *March* written over it.”

CHAPTER II.

The Death of Shakspeare — Observations on his Will — On the Disposition and Moral Character of Shakspeare — On the Monument erected to his Memory, and on the Engraving of him prefixed to the first Folio Edition of his Plays — Conclusion.

THE death of Shakspeare, of which the closing paragraph of the last chapter had afforded us an intimation, took place on Tuesday, the 23d of April, 1616, on his birth-day, and when he had exactly completed his fifty-second year. It is remarkable, that on the same day expired, in Spain, his great and amiable contemporary, Cervantes; the world being thus deprived, nearly at the same moment, of the two most original writers which modern Europe has produced.

That not the smallest account of the disease which terminated so valuable a life, should have been transmitted to posterity, is perhaps equally singular; and the more so, as our poet was, no doubt, attended by his son-in-law, Dr. Hall, who was then forty years of age; and who should have recollected, that the circumstances which led to the dissolution of such a man, had, whether professionally important or not, a claim to preservation and publicity. But the age was a most incurious one, as to the personal history of literary men; and Hall, who left for publication a manuscript collection of cases, selected from not less than a thousand diseases, has omitted the only one which could have secured to his work any permanent interest or value.*

On the second day after his decease, the remains of Shakspeare were committed to the grave; being buried on the 25th of April, on the north side of the chancel of the great church of Stratford.

Fortunately, some light has been thrown upon the domestic circumstances of the poet, by the preservation of his Will, yet extant in the Prerogative Court, and which, though often published, we have again introduced, as a necessary appendage to our work.

The most striking features in this document, are the apparent neglect of his wife, and the favouritism exhibited with regard to his eldest daughter. Mrs. Shakspeare, indeed, was so entirely forgotten in the original Will, that the only bequest which her husband makes her, of his “second best bed, with the furniture,” is introduced by an interlineation.

This omission, and the trifling nature of the legacy, have given birth to some conjectures on the part of his biographers and commentators. Oldys, misapplying the language of one of his sonnets, has hinted, that the poet entertained some doubts as to the fidelity of his beautiful wife; an intimation which soon after occasioned a curious controversy between Messrs. Steevens and Malone; the latter impeaching, and the former defending, the conjugal affection of their bard. “His wife had not wholly escaped his memory,” observes Mr. Malone; “he had forgot her,—he had recollected her,—but so recollected her, as more strongly to mark how little he esteemed her; he had already (as it is vulgarly expressed) cut her off, not indeed with a shilling, but with an old bed.” “That our poet was jealous of this lady,” remarks Mr. Steevens, “is an unwarrantable conjecture. Having, in times of health and prosperity, provided for her by settlement (or knowing that her father had already done so), he bequeathed to her at his

* These Cases were afterwards translated from the original Latin by James Cooke, a Surgeon at Warwick, under the title of “Select Observations on English Bodies; or Cures, both emperical and historical, performed upon very eminent persons in desperate diseases.” London, 1657. 12mo.

death, not merely an old piece of furniture, but perhaps, as a mark of peculiar tenderness,

“ The very bed that on his bridal night
Received him to the arms of Belvidera.”

In fact, we do know that Shakspeare married for love, but we do not know of any the smallest intimation or hint, previous to the wild conjecture of Oldys, that coolness or estrangement had subsisted between the poet and his wife. We have every right, therefore, to conclude, that Mrs. Shakspeare had been previously and amply provided for, either by her husband, or by her father, whose circumstances are represented by Rowe, as having been “substantial.” We may, at least, rest satisfied, as well from the known integrity of Shakspeare, as from the humanity of his disposition, that nothing harsh or unjust had been committed by him on this occasion. Indeed, had the case been otherwise, the love of mankind for propagating what tends to deteriorate superior characters, would, doubtless, have protected such a family-anecdote from oblivion.

Why the executorship was intrusted to Dr. Hall and his lady, may be readily conceived to have originated, independent of their being the persons principally concerned, in the knowledge of the poet that the former, who was a man of business, was much better calculated than Mrs. Shakspeare could possibly be, for carrying the will into execution.

That superior qualities of the head and heart, more especially when united, are entitled, even under the parental roof, to marked distinction, who will deny? and that such were the blended qualities which rendered Susanna the favourite of her father may be certainly inferred from the circumstance that, while we hear nothing of Judith, but that she is supposed to have married contrary to her father's wishes, of Susanna we are told that she was “witty above her sex;” that she had “something of Shakspeare” in her, and, above all, that she was “wise to salvation,” that she “wept with all that wept, yet set herself to cheer them up with comforts.” To a child thus great and good, we need not wonder that Shakspeare paid a delighted deference.*

It may be objected that, however superior the elder daughter might be in point of intellect and moral sensibility, if the younger had done nothing worse than marry without her father's approbation, no great difference should have been made between them in the distribution of his property. But we must recollect, that they moved in different circles, that whilst Susanna was united to a physician, who being in great practice, and intimate with the first families in the neighbourhood, was obliged to support an establishment of much expense, Judith was the wife of a vintner, a station comparatively inferior, and not necessarily requiring such an expenditure. Under these considerations we shall probably be induced to acquit the poet of any undue partiality, and to view the provisions of his Will as neither disproportioned to the stations nor inadequate to the necessities of the parties concerned.

To the disposition and moral character of Shakspeare, tradition has ever borne the most uniform and favourable testimony. And, indeed, had she been silent on the subject, his own works would have whispered to us the truth; would have told us, in almost every page, of the gentleness, the benevolence, and the goodness of his heart. For, though no one has exceeded him in painting the stronger passions of the human breast, it is evident that he delighted most in the expression of loveliness and simplicity, and was ever willing to descend from the loftiest soarings of imagination, to sport with innocence and beauty. Though “the world of spirits and of nature,” says the admirable Schlegel, “had laid all their treasures at his feet: in strength a demi-god, in profundity of view a

* I recollect an engraving, from a picture by Westall, of Milton composing *Paradise Lost* in which he is attended by his two daughters. Shakspeare and his favourite Susanna, might furnish a pleasing subject for the same elegant artist.

prophet, in all-seeing wisdom a protecting spirit of a higher order, he yet lowered himself to mortals as if unconscious of his superiority, and was as open and unassuming as a child.”*

That a temper of this description, and combined with such talents, should be the object of sincere and ardent friendship, can excite no surprise. “I loved the man,” says Jonson, with a noble burst of enthusiasm, “and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest; and of an open and free nature;” and Rowe, repeating the uncontradicted rumour of times past, has told us,—“that every one, who had a true taste of merit, and could distinguish men, had generally a just value and esteem for him;” adding, “that his exceeding candour and good-nature must certainly have inclined all the gentler part of the world to love him.”

No greater proof, indeed, can be given of the felicity of his temper, and the sweetness of his manners, than that all who addressed him, seem to have uniformly connected his name with the epithets worthy, gentle, or beloved;† nor was he backward in returning this esteem, many of his sonnets indicating the warmth with which he cherished the remembrance of his friends. Thus the thirtieth opens with the following pensive retrospect:—

“ When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh —————
For precious friends hid in death’s dateless night;”

and in the thirty-first he tenderly exclaims,—

“ How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
As interest of the dead!”

Another very fascinating feature in the character of Shakspeare, was the almost constant cheerfulness and serenity of his mind: he was “verie good company,” says Aubrey, “and of a very ready, and pleasant, and smooth witt.”‡ In this, as Mr. Godwin has justly observed, he bore a striking resemblance to Chaucer, who was remarkable for the placidity and cheerfulness of his disposition;§ nor can there, probably, be a surer indication of that peace and sunshine of the soul which surpasses all other gifts, than this habitual tone of mind.

That Shakspeare was entitled to its possession from his moral virtues, we have already seen; and that, in a religious point of view, he had a claim to the enjoyment, the numerous passages in his works, which breathe a spirit of pious gratitude and devotional rapture, will sufficiently declare. In fact, upon the topic of religious, as upon that of ethic wisdom, no profane poet can furnish us with a greater number of just and luminous aphorisms; passages which dwell upon the heart and reach the soul, for they have issued from lips of fire, from conceptions worthy of a superior nature, from feelings solemn and unearthly.

To these observations on the disposition and moral character of Shakspeare, we must add a few remarks on the taste which he seems to have possessed, in an exquisite degree, for all the forms of beauty, whether resulting from nature or from art. No person can study his writings, indeed, without perceiving, that, throughout the vast range of being, whatever is lovely and harmonious, whatever is sweet in expression, or graceful in proportion, was constantly present to his mind; that

“ on every part,
In earth, or air, the meadow’s purple stores,
The moon’s mild radiance, or the virgin’s form,

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature. vol. ii. p. 138.

† “My gentle Shakspeare” is the language of Jonson, in his Poem to the memory of our bard: and see the Commendatory Poems Prefixed to our author’s works.

‡ Letters by Eminent persons. from the Bodleian Library, vol. iii. p. 307.

§ Life of Chaucer, vol. iv. p. 175.

— he saw pourtray'd
That uncreated beauty, which delights
The mind supreme." *

Nor was he a less delighted worshipper of the imitative efforts of art. With what taste and enthusiasm he has spoken of the effects of music, has been already observed; but it remains to notice in what a sublime spirit of piety he refers this concord of sweet sounds, to its source in that transcript of Almighty, "the world's harmonious volume:—"

"There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eye'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Of the beauties of painting and sculpture he appears to have had a keen and lively discernment. On Julio Romano, the most poetical, perhaps, of painters, he has pronounced, that "had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work, 'he' would beguile Nature of her custom; and of his masterly appreciation of the art of sculpture, the following lines from the *The Winter's Tale*, where Paulina unveils to Leontes the supposed statue of Hermione, afford evidence beyond all praise:—

"*Paul.* ————— Here it is: prepare
To see the life as lively mock'd, as ever
Still sleep mock'd death: behold; and say, 'tis well."—&c. Act v. sc. 3.

To the memory of a poet who, independent of the matchless talents which he has exhibited in his own peculiar province, had shown such proofs of his attachment to the sister arts, some tribute, from these departments of genius, might naturally be expected, and was certainly due. Nor was it long ere the debt of gratitude was paid; before the year 1623, a monument, containing a bust of the poet, had been erected in Stratford Church, immediately above the grave which inclosed his hallowed relics. The tradition of his native town is, that this bust was copied from a cast after nature. † It is placed beneath an arch, and between two Corinthian columns of black marble, and represents the poet in a sitting posture, with a cushion spread before him, holding a pen in his right hand, whilst his left rests upon a scroll of paper. The entablature exhibits the arms of Shakspeare surmounted by a death's head, with an infantine form sitting on each side; that on the right supporting, in the same hand, a spade, and the figure on the left, whose eyes are closed, reposing its right hand on a skull, whilst the other holds an inverted torch. ‡

On a tablet below the cushion are engraved the two following inscriptions:

"*Judicio Pylivm, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,
'Terra tegit, popvlvs mæret, Olympvs habet.'*"

"Stay passenger, why goest thou by so fast,
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plast
Within this monument, Shakspeare; with whome
Quick natvre dide; whose name doth deck ys tombe
Far more than cost; sieth all yt. he hath writt,
Leaves living art, bvt page to serve his witt.

Obiit Ano. Doi. 1616. Ætatis 53. Die 23. Ap."

* Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, book i.

† Wheler's *Guide to Stratford*, p. 87.—"If Shakspeare's and Lord Totness's tombs," says Mr. Wheler, "were erected by one and the same artist, circumstances not at all improbable, it would not appear that he (Thomas Stanton, the Sculptor) had any want of skill in preserving a resemblance; for the monumental likeness of Lord Totness strongly resembles the capital paintings of him in Clopton House, and at Gorham-bury, in Hertfordshire, as well as the engraving of him prefixed to his '*Hibernia Pacata*,' a posthumous publication in 1633."

‡ The arms on this monument, are,—Or, on a bend sable, a tilting spear of the first, point upwards, headed argent.—Crest, A falcon displayed argent, supporting a spear in pale or.—Vide *Shakspeare's Works*, p. xvi. Paris edition, 2 vol. 8 vo.

A flat stone which covers his grave, presents us with these singular lines, said to have been written by the bard himself, and which were probably suggested, as Mr. Malone has remarked, "by an apprehension that 'his' remains might share the same fate with those of the rest of his countrymen, and be added to the immense pile of human bones deposited in the charnel-house at Stratford:—

" Good frend, for Jesvs sake forbear
To digg the dvst enclosed heare ;
Blese be ye. man yt. spares thes stones,
And cvrst be he yt. moves my bones."

" We view the monumental bust of Shakspeare," observes Mr. Britton, " as a family record ; as a memorial raised by the affection and esteem of his relatives, to keep alive contemporary admiration, and to excite the glow of enthusiasm in posterity. This invaluable ' effigy' is attested by tradition, consecrated by time, and preserved in the inviolability of its own simplicity and sacred station. It was evidently executed immediately after the poet's decease ; and probably under the superintendence of his son-in-law, Dr. Hall, and his daughter ; the latter of whom, according to her epitaph, was ' witty above her sexe,' and therein like her father. Leonard Digges, in a poem, praising the works and worth of Shakspeare, and published within seven years after his death, speaks of the Stratford monument as a well-known object. Dugdale, in his ' Antiquities of Warwickshire,' 1656, gives a plate of the monument, but drawn and engraved in a truly tasteless and inaccurate style, and observes in the text, that the poet was famous, and thus entitled to such distinction. Langbaine, in his ' Account of English Dramatic Poets,' 1691, pronounces the Stratford bust Shakspeare's ' true effigies.' These are decided proofs of its antiquity ; and we may safely conclude that it was intended to be a faithful portrait of the poet.—

" The bust is the size of life ; it is formed out of a block of soft stone, and was originally painted over in imitation of nature. The hands and face were of flesh colour, the eyes of a light hazle, and the hair and beard auburn ; the doublet or coat was scarlet, and covered with a loose black gown, or tabard, without sleeves ; the upper part of the cushion was green, the under half crimson, and the tassels gilt.* Such appear to have been the original features of this important, but neglected or insulted bust. After remaining in this state above one hundred and twenty years, Mr. John Ward, grandfather to Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, caused it to be ' repaired,' and the original colours preserved,† in 1748, from the profits of the representation of *Othello*. This was a generous, and apparently judicious act, and therefore very unlike the next alteration it was subjected to in 1793. In that year, Mr. Malone caused the bust to be covered over with one or more coats of white paint ; and thus at once destroyed its original character, and greatly injured the expression of the face.‡ Having absurdly characterized this expression for ' pertness,' and therefore ' differing from that placid composure and thoughtful gravity so perceptible in his original portrait, and his best prints,' Mr. M. could have few scruples about injuring or destroying it. In this very act, and in this line of comment, our zealous annotator has passed an irrevocable sentence on his own judgment. If the opinions of some of the best sculptors and painters of the metropolis are entitled to respect and confidence on such a subject, that of Mr. Malone is at once false and absurd. They justly remark, that the face indicates cheerfulness, good humour, suavity, benignity and intelligence. These characteristics are developed by the mouth and its muscles—by the cheeks—eye-brows—forehead—and skull ; and hence they rationally infer, that the face is worked from nature." §

* " Although the practice of painting statues and busts to imitate nature is repugnant to good taste, and must be stigmatized as vulgar and hostile to every principle of art, yet when an effigy is thus coloured and transmitted to us, as illustrative of a particular age or people, and as a record of fashion and costume, it becomes an interesting relic, and should be preserved with as much care as an Etruscan vase, or an early specimen of Raffael's painting ; and the man who deliberately defaces or destroys either, will ever be regarded as a criminal in the high court of criticism and taste. From an absence of this feeling, many truly curious, and, to us, important subjects have been destroyed. Among which is to be noticed a vast monument of antiquity on Marbrough Downs, in Wiltshire ; and which, though once the most stupendous work of human labour and skill in Great Britain, is now nearly demolished. Britton.

† " Wheler's Guide, p. 90.

‡ " Mr. Wheler, in his interesting Topographical Vade Mecum, relating to Stratford, has given publicity to the following stanzas, which were written in the Album, at Stratford church, by one of the visitors to Shakspeare's tomb."

" Stranger, to whom this Monument is shown,
Invoke the Poet's curses on Malone ;
Whose meddling zeal his barbarous taste displays,
And daubs his tomb-stone, as he marr'd his plays."

§ " Britton's Remarks on the Monumental Bust of Shakspeare." These Remarks, which were published on April 23, 1816, "The Anniversary of the Birth and Death of Shakspeare, and the Second Centenary

With these observations, which seem the result of a just and discriminating judgment, we feel happy in coinciding; having had an opportunity, in the summer of 1815, of visiting this celebrated monument, for the purpose of gratifying what we conceive to be a laudable curiosity. When on the spot, we felt convinced, from the circumstances which have been preserved relative to the erection of this bust; from the period of life at which the poet died, and above all from the character, distinctness and expression of the features themselves, that this invaluable relique may be considered as a correct resemblance of our beloved bard.

That he was "a handsome well-shaped man," we are expressly informed by Aubrey, and universal tradition has attributed to him cheerfulness and good temper. Now the Stratford effigy tells us all this, together with the character of his age, in language which cannot be mistaken; and it once superadded to the little which has been recorded of his person, what we have no doubt was accurately given by the original painter of his bust, the colour of his eyes and the beautiful auburn of his hair.

But it tells us still more; for the impress of that mighty mind which ranged at will through all the realms of nature and of fancy, and which, though incessantly employed in the personification of passion and of feeling, was ever great without effort, and at peace within itself, is visible in the exquisite harmony and symmetry of the whole head and countenance, which, not only in each separate feature, in the swell and expansion of the forehead, in the commanding sweep of the eye brow, in the undulating outline of the nose, and in the open sweetness of the lips, but in their combined and integral expression, breathe of him, of whom it may be said, in his own emphatic language, that

"We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

Very shortly after the erection of this monument, appeared the first folio edition of our author's plays, in the title-page of which, bearing the date of 1623, is found the earliest print of Shakspeare, an engraving by Martin Droeshout, with the following attestation of its verisimilitude from the pen of Ben Jonson:

"TO THE READER.

"THIS figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakspeare cut;
Wherein the graver had a strife
With nature, to out-do the life.
O, could he but have drawn his wit,
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the print would then surpass
All that was ever writ in brass;
But since he cannot, reader, look,
Not on his picture, but his book."

Between the wretched engraving, thus undeservedly eulogised, and the monumental bust at Stratford, there is certainly such a resemblance as to prove, that the assertion of Jonson with regard to its likeness, was not altogether without foundation; but, as Mr. Steevens has well remarked, "Shakspeare's countenance, deformed by Droeshout, resembles the sign of Sir Roger de Coverley, when it had been changed into a Saracen's head; on which occasion The Spectator observes, that the features of the gentle Knight were still apparent through the lineaments of the ferocious Mussulman."

There is, however, a much greater, nay, a very close and remarkable simili-

after his Decease," are accompanied by an admirably executed Mezzotinto of Shakspeare from the Monumental Bust; engraved by William Ward, from a Painting by Thomas Phillips, Esq. R. A. after a Cast made from the original bust by George Bullock.

Mr. Britton had previously expressed a similar opinion of the merits and fidelity of this Bust, in some very ingenious and well-written "Remarks on the Life and Writings of Shakspeare," prefixed to an edition of the Poet's Plays, by Whittingham and Arliss.

tude, between the engraving, from the Felton Shakspeare, and the bust at Stratford. What basis Mr. Gilchrist may have had for his observation, that "Mr. Steevens failed in communicating to the public his confidence in the integrity of Mr. Felton's picture," we know not; * but, if the most striking affinity to the monumental effigy be deemed, as we think it ought to be, a proof of authenticity, this picture is entitled to our confidence: for whether we consider the general contour of the head, or the particular conformation of the forehead, eyes, nose, or mouth, the resemblance is complete; the only perceptible deviation being in the construction of the eye-brows, which, instead of forming nearly a perfect arch, as in the sculpture, have an horizontal direction, and are somewhat elevated towards the temples.

We have now reached the termination of a work, of which whatever shall be its reception with the public, even Diffidence itself may say, that it has been prosecuted with incessant labour and unwearied research; with an ardent desire to give it a title to acceptance, and with an anxiety, which has proved injurious to health, that it should be deemed not altogether unworthy of the bard whose name it bears.

It has also been a labour of love, and, though much indisposition has accompanied several of the years devoted to its construction, it is closed with a mingled sensation of gratitude, for what of health and strength has been spared to its author; of regret, in relinquishing, what, with all its concomitant anxieties, has been often productive of rational delight; and of hope, that, in the inevitable hour which is fast approaching, no portion of its pages shall suggest a thought, which can add poignancy to suffering, or bitterness to recollection.

* Gifford's Jonson, vol. i. p. cccviii.

APPENDIX.

SHAKSPEARE'S WILL.

(From the Original, in the Office of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.)

Vicesimo quinto die Martii, Anno Regni Domini nostri Jacobi nunc Regis Angliæ, etc. decimo quarto, et Scolæ quadragesimo nono. Anno Domini, 1616.

IN the name of God, Amen. I WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent, in perfect health and memory,* (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following; that is to say:

First, I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth whereof it is made.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Judith, one hundred and fifty pounds of lawful English money, to be paid unto her in manner and form following; that is to say, one hundred pounds in discharge of her marriage-portion within one year after my decease, with consideration after the rate of two shillings in the pound † for so long time as the same shall be unpaid unto her after my decease; and the fifty pounds residue thereof, upon her surrendering of, or giving of such sufficient security as the overseers of this my will shall like of, to surrender or grant, all her estate and right that shall descend or come unto her after my decease, or that she now hath, of, in, or to, one copyhold tenement, with the appurtenances, lying and being in Stratford-upon-Avon aforesaid, in the said county of Warwick, being parcel or holden of the manor of Rowington, unto my daughter Susanna Hall, and her heirs for ever.

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Judith one hundred and fifty pounds more, if she, or any issue of her body, be living at the end of three years next ensuing the day of the date of this my will, during which time my executors to pay her consideration from my decease according to the rate aforesaid: and if she die within the said term without issue of her body, then my will is, and I do give and bequeath one hundred pounds thereof to my niece ‡ Elizabeth Hall,

* From the short period which elapsed between the date of this Will and the death of the poet, we must infer, that the "malady which at so early a period of life deprived England of its brightest ornament," was sudden in its attack, and rapid in its progress.

† *Ten per cent.*, we find from this passage, was the usual interest of money in our author's days; and in the epitaph on Mr. Combe, as preserved by Aubrey, this old gentleman is censured for taking twelve per cent. :—

"But Combes will have twelve, he swears and he vows."

‡ —to my niece—) "Elizabeth Hall was our poet's grand-daughter. So, in Othello, act i. sc. 1, Iago says to Brabantio: 'You'll have your *nephews* neigh to you;' meaning his grand children."—Malone.

and the fifty pounds to be set forth by my executors during the life of my sister Joan Hart, and the use and profit thereof coming, shall be paid to my said sister Joan, and after her decease the said fifty pounds shall remain amongst the children of my said sister, equally to be divided amongst them; but if my said daughter Judith be living at the end of the said three years, or any issue of her body, then my will is, and so I devise and bequeath the said hundred and fifty pounds to be set out by my executors and overseers for the best benefit of her and her issue, and the stock not to be paid unto her so long as she shall be married and covert baron; but my will is, that she shall have the consideration yearly paid unto her during her life, and after her decease the said stock and consideration to be paid to her children, if she have any, and if not, to her executors or assigns, she living the said term after my decease: provided that if such husband as she shall at the end of the said three years be married unto, or at any (time) after, do sufficiently assure unto her, and the issue of her body, lands answerable to the portion by this my will given unto her, and to be adjudged so by my executors and overseers, then my will is, that the said hundred and fifty pounds shall be paid to such husband as shall make such assurance, to his own use. *

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said sister Joan twenty pounds, and all my wearing apparel, to be paid and delivered within one year after my decease; and I do will and devise unto her the house, with the appurtenances, in Stratford, wherein she dwelleth, for her natural life, under the yearly rent of twelve-pence. †

Item, I give and bequeath unto her three sons, William Hart, — Hart, ‡ and Michael Hart, five pounds a-piece, to be paid Within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath unto the said Elizabeth Hall all my plate (except my broad silver and gilt bowl) that I now have at the date of this my will. §

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of Stratford aforesaid ten pounds; to Mr. Thomas Combe ** my sword; to Thomas Russel, esqr. five pounds; and to Francis Collins †† of the borough of Warwick, gent. thirteen pounds six shillings and eight-pence, to be paid within one year after my decease.

Item, I give and bequeath to Hamlet (*Hamnet*) Sadler, ‡‡ twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring; to William Reynolds, gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence, to buy him a ring;

* Judith died at Stratford, aged 77, and was buried there, Feb. 9th, 1662.

† Joan Hart, the poet's sister, was buried at Stratford, Nov. 4th, 1646.

‡ "It is singular that neither Shakspeare nor any of his family should have recollected the Christian name of his nephew, who was born at Stratford but eleven years before the making of his will. His Christian name was *Thomas*; and he was baptized in that town, July 24, 1605."—Malone.

§ Elizabeth Hall, the poet's grand-daughter, was married at Stratford, on April 22d, 1626, to Thomas Nash, Esq., and after the decease of this gentleman on April 4th, 1647, she again entered into the marriage-state with Sir John Barnard of Abington, in Northamptonshire. The ceremony took place at Billesley near Stratford, on the 5th of June, 1649, and Lady Barnard died, without issue by either of her husbands, at Abington, and was buried there on the 17th of February, 1669 70.

"If any of Shakspeare's manuscripts," remarks Mr. Malone, "remained in his grand-daughter's custody at the time of her second marriage (and some *letters* at least she surely must have had), they probably were then removed to the house of her new husband at Abington. Sir Hugh Clopton, who was born two years after her death, mentioned to Mr. Macklin, in the year 1742, an old tradition that she had carried away with her from Statford many of her grandfather's papers. On the death of Sir John Barnard they must have fallen into the hands of Mr. Edward Bagley, Lady Barnard's executor; and if any descendant of that gentleman be now living, in his custody they probably remain."

** "Mr. Thomas Combe was baptized at Stratford, Feb. 9, 1588-9, so that he was twenty-seven years old at the time of Shakspeare's death. He died at Stratford in July, 1657, aged 68; and his elder brother William died at the same place, Jan. 30, 1666-7, aged 80. Mr. Thomas Combe by his will, made June 20, 1656, directed his executors to convert all his personal property into money, and to lay it out in the purchase of lands, to be settled on William Combe, the eldest son of John Combe, of All-church, in the county of Worcester, gent. and his heirs male; remainder to his two brothers successively. Where, therefore, our poet's sword has wandered, I have not been able to discover."—Malone.

†† "*Francis Collins*— "This gentleman, who was the son of Mr. Walter Collins, was baptized at Stratford, Dec. 24, 1582."—Malone.

‡‡ "*Hamnet Sadler* was godfather to Shakspeare's only son, who was called after him. Mr. Sadler, I believe, was born about the year 1550, and died at Stratford-upon-Avon, in October, 1624. His wife, Judith Sadler, who was god-mother to Shakspeare's youngest daughter, was buried there, March 23, 1613-14. Our poet probably was god-father to their son *William*, who was baptized at Stratford Feb. 5, 1597-8."—Malone.

to my godson William Walker twenty shillings in gold; to Anthony Nash,* gent. twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to Mr. John Nash † twenty-six shillings eight-pence; and to my fellowes, John Hemyng ‡, Richard Burbage §, and Henry Cundell,** twenty-six shillings eight-pence a-piece, to buy them rings.

Item, I give, will, bequeath, and devise, unto my daughter Susanna Hall, †† for better enabling of her to perform this my will, and towards the performance thereof, all that capital messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances in Stratford aforesaid, called the New Place, wherein I now dwell, and two messuages or tenements, with the appurtenances, situate, lying, and being in Henley-street, within the borough of Stratford aforesaid; and all my barns, stables, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever, situate, lying, and being, or to be had, received, perceived, or taken, within the towns, hamlets, villages, fields, and grounds of Stratford-upon-Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, or in any of them, in the said county of Warwick; and also all that messuage or tenement, with the appurtenances, wherein one John Robinson dwelleth, situate, lying, and being, in the Blackfriars in London near the Wardrobe; †† and all other my lands, tenements, and hereditaments whatsoever; to have and to hold all and singular the said premises, with their appurtenances, unto the said Susanna Hall, for and during the term of her natural life; and after her decease to the first son of her body lawfully issuing; and to the heirs males of the body of the said first son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the second son of her body lawfully issuing, and to the heirs males of the body of the said second son lawfully issuing; and for default of such heirs, to the third son of the body of the said Susanna lawfully issuing, and to the heirs males of the body of the third son lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, the same so to be and remain to the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sons of her body, lawfully issuing one after another, and to the heirs males of the bodies of the said fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sons lawfully issuing, in such manner as it is before limited to be and remain to the first, second, and third sons of her body, and to their heirs males; and for default of such issue, the said premises to be and remain to my said niece Hall, and the heirs males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to my daughter Judith, and the heirs males of her body lawfully issuing; and for default of such issue, to the right heirs of me the said William Shakspeare for ever.

Item, I give unto my wife *** my second best bed, with the furniture.

Item, I give and bequeath to my said daughter Judith my broad silver gilt bowl. All the rest of my goods, chattels, leases, plate, jewels, and household stuff whatsoever, after my debts and legacies paid, and my funeral expenses discharged, I give, devise, and bequeath to my son-in-law, John Hall, ††† gent. and my daughter Susanna his wife, whom I ordain and make executors

* "*Anthony Nash* was father of Mr. Thomas Nash, who married our poet's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Hall. He lived, I believe, at Welcombe, where his estate lay; and was buried at Stratford, Nov. 18, 1622." Malone.

† "Mr. John Nash died at Stratford, and was buried there, Nov. 10, 1623."—Malone.

‡ John Hemyng died in October, 1630.

§ Burbage died in March, 1619.

** Cundell died in December, 1627. For accounts of these three celebrated performers, see Shakspeare's Works, Paris edition, vol. i. p. xcix *et seq.*

†† Susanna Hall, [the poet's favourite daughter, died on the 11th of July, 1649, aged 66, and was buried in Stratford church on the 16th of the same month.

†† This messuage or tenement was the house which was mortgaged to Henry Walker.

§§ The poet's wife died on the 6th of August, 1629, and was buried between her husband's grave and the north wall of the chancel. A brass plate affixed to her tomb-stone exhibits the following inscription:—

"Ubera, tu mater, tu lac vitamq. dedisti,
Væ mihi; pro tanto munere Saxa dabo!
Quam mallet, amoveat lapidem, bonus Angel' ore'
Exeat ut Christi Corpus, imago tua
Sed nil vota valent, venias cito Christe resurget,
Clausula licet tumulo mater, et astra petet."

*** John Hall, M.D. died Nov. 25, 1635, aged 60. His grave-stone in Stratford church is thus inscribed:—

"Hallius hic situs est medica celeberrimus arte,
Expectans regni gaudia læta Dei

of this my last will and testament. And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russel, esqr. and Francis Collins, gent. to be overseers hereof. And do revoke all former wills, and publish this to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand, the day and year first above written.

By me,

William Byrd

Witness to the publishing hereof,

FRA. COLLYNS,
JULIUS SHAW,
JOHN ROBINSON,
HAMLET SADLER,
ROBERT WHATTICOTT.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London, coram Magistro William Byrde, Legum Doctore, etc. vicesimo secundo die mensis Junii, Anno Domini 1616; juramento Johannis Hall unius ex. cui, etc. de bene, etc. jurat. reservata potestate, etc. Susannæ Hall, alt. ex. etc. eam cum venerit, etc. petitur, etc.

Dignus erat meritis qui Nestora vinceret annis,
Interris omnes, sed rapit æqua dies;
Ne tumulo, quid desit adest fidissima conjux,
Et vitæ comitem nunc quoq. mortis habet."

THE END.

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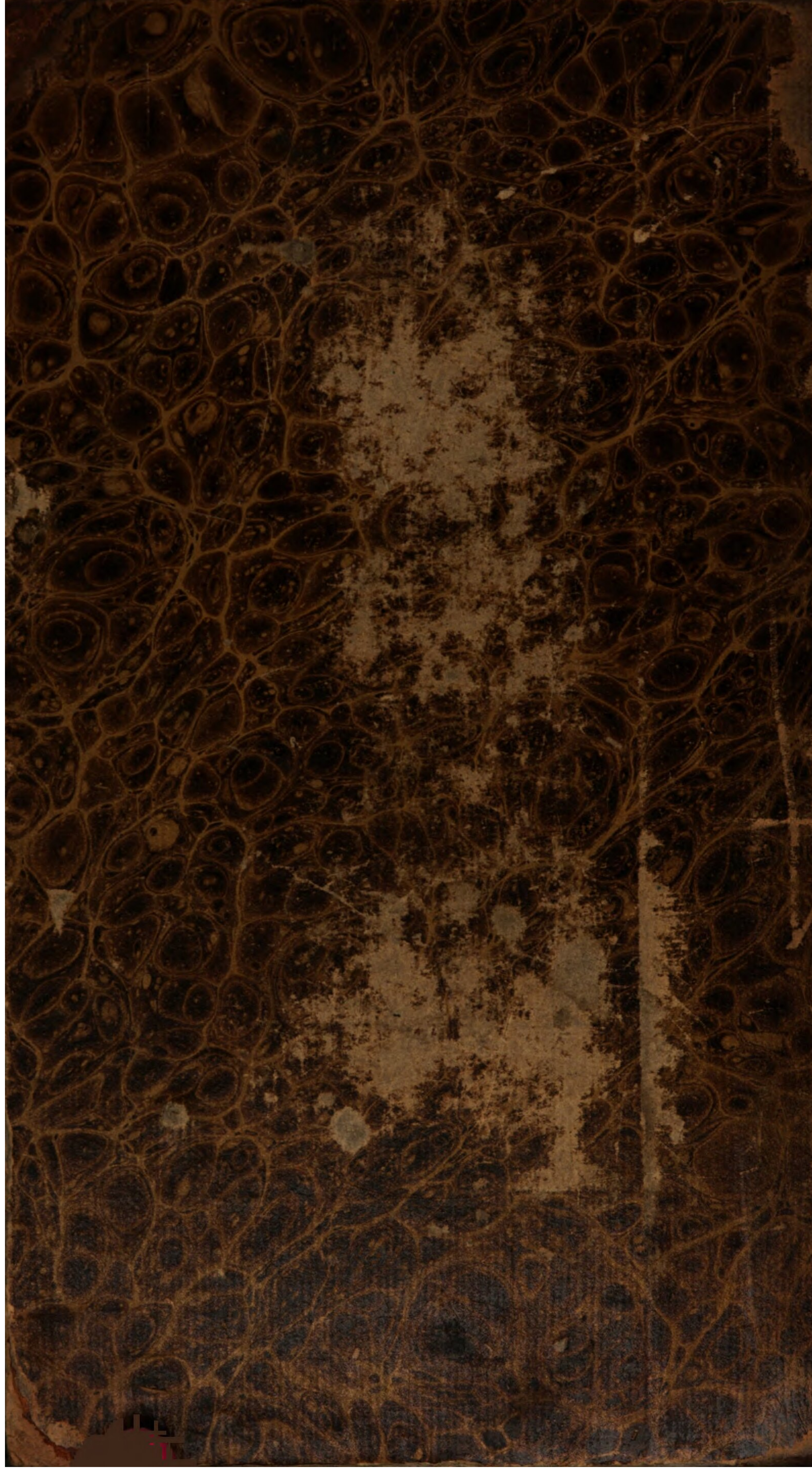
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